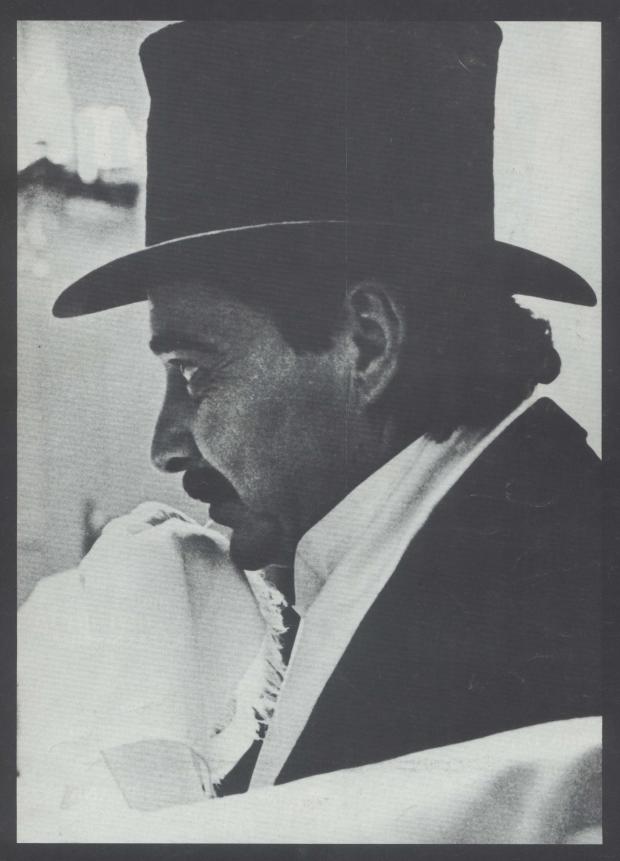
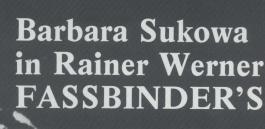
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INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY · SPRING 1982 · VOLUME 51 No 2

sight and sound is an independent critical magazine sponsored and published by the British Film Institute. It is not an organ for the expression of official BFI policy: signed articles represent the views of their authors.

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On the cover: Monsieur Proust (Jürgen Arndt) in Percy Adlon's 'Celeste'.

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Calcutta/Disney disciples/
James Toback/Krull/
Gay Cinema/Berlin 77

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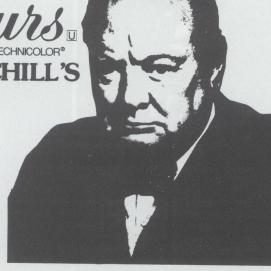
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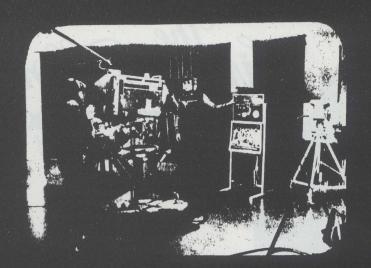
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IN THE PICTURE

The Worst Year

Britain's 1981 record for cinema attendance and film production

The official statistics for cinema attendance in Britain during 1981 will not be published until April. Screen International, however, who are seldom far wrong on such matters, have predicted that when the figures for the last months of the year are added to those already published, the 1981 total is likely to be about 90 million. 'Admissions were down in 1981 compared to 1980 for every month bar one from January to August,' says Screen International. 'The exception was April, almost certainly as a result of Superman II being released'-a remarkable comment on the power of a single picture to influence national statistics. If the present rate of decline continues, cinema attendance by 1987 would be down to about a million a week; at which point, cinemagoing as a mass entertainment would virtually have put up the shutters.

The 1981 figures are doubly depressing, both in terms of the percentage decline from 1980's 102 million and in the fact that the psychological barrier of 100 million admissions a year has been broken not hesitantly but with a dull and perhaps final thud. If Screen International's 90 million total is accurate, it's fairly amazing to realise that the entire 1981 audience would have kept the cinemas going for a mere three weeks during the long distant boom year of 1946. For far too long, of course, the cinema industry continued to regard the great mass attendance figures of the 1940s as somehow representing its rightful audience, spitefully stolen away by television but perhaps after a fashion recoverable. It's interesting, too, that so much theoretical and sociological writing accepted the notion of really large-scale cinema attendance long after it ceased to be a reality. In fact, the habit of regular cinema-going proved to be one of this century's less longlived fashions, even possibly sustained rather beyond its natural term by the shortage of other entertainment during the war

The cinema still comfortably beats Bingo, where attendance figures are also slightly downsomething over 400,000 a week, against an estimated 1.73 million for cinema-goers. But part of the attraction of Bingo, for its more elderly patrons, has probably been the old, comfortably familiar setting of the local cinema. If it were not that it would be hard to get through an average childhood without at least one visit to a



Indian superstar Rekha in 'Umrao Jaan'.

Disney movie, one could assume that there might now be young adults who had never actually set foot in a cinema. And the gap between watching films in solitude (on television, or rented or bought from the booming video trade) and seeing them on a cinema screen, with an audience, is widening every year.

This worst year for cinema attendance was also, Screen International noted, the 'worst ever for indigenous production.' 'Production The magazine's Thermometer' registered only twenty-four titles for 1981, against thirty-eight in 1980—in itself already a fairly dismal year. 'The list ... represents only the mainstream product and therefore does not include the handful of mini-budgeted exploitation pictures which shoot with minimal publicity during the year." The mainstream twenty-four include Blake Edwards' Victor/ Victoria (EMI), Fred Zinnemann's Maiden Maiden (The Ladd Co), the Bond picture For Your Eyes Only (United Artists), the latest Agatha Christie, Evil Under the Sun (EMI), The Great Muppet Caper (ITC), Richard Attenborough's Gandhi and the Franco-British Enigma. Different generations of native independence are represented by Lindsay Anderson's Britannia Hospital and Chris Petit's An Unsuitable Job for a Woman. And it is not without significance that three of the two dozen-The Draughtsman's Contract, Ascendancy and Gold-come from the BFI Production Board. The Board's 12.5 per cent share in numbers, if hardly in total investment, must qualify it at least as a minor major, in Mamoun Hassan's phrase.

In February 1981 there were six

films in production; in February 1982 there were seven, ranging from Revenge of the Jedi to Scrubbers by way of Nicolas Roeg's Eureka, Peter Yates' Krull and The Pirates of Penzance. Things in this area may not exactly be looking up quantitatively, but at least the production statistics seem likely to hold up better than the attendance figures.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Calcutta

Filmotsav '82 rivalled the Fourth Test and drew crowds for Godard

The decision to hold this year's Filmotsav, India's non-competitive festival, in Calcutta must have been a difficult one. But the West Bengal government seized its opportunity. The city's celebrated power cuts were kept to a minimum, its best hotel was reserved for the large posse of foreign delegates, and even the advent of the Fourth Test Match, drawing 85,000 daily to the nearby cricket stadium, was not allowed to cause undue interference. Crowds followed the cricketers everywhere. But they followed the films almost as avidly. A Godard retrospective, for instance, was packed throughout, with queues around the block of a sizeable cinema 24 hours beforehand. And no doubt Godard himself, had he been a visitor, would have received almost as much attention as Boycott or Botham.

There were, however, alarums. The non-arrival of newly subtitled prints for the Indian Panorama (held up apparently not in Brussels, where they were sent before Christmas, but by prevaricating customs officials in Delhi) caused a mini-riot and much bad feeling. Film, like cricket, is manna in Calcutta, and when the public is denied either, conspiracy theses abound. One could never quite tell whether the crowd assembled outside our hotel was waiting to cheer the cricketers, also staying there, or to lynch the director of the festival for some imagined sin of omission.

In the end, the Festival Directorate, part of the National Film Development Corporation, pronounced itself well pleased with Filmotsav '82. It must have been a near thing. What no one could say was that the all-important Panorama did not produce some interesting films. Ray's two shorts, discussed elsewhere in this issue, were much admired. And so, at the other end of the scale, was a film from the small state of Manipur which looked as if it had been made from stock someone else had thrown away. Aribam Syam Sharma's Imagi Ningthem (My Son My Precious), however, easily transcended that disadvantage with a story about a small boy tossed about by family feuds that was beautifully acted and absolutely authentic looking. It is Sharma's fourth feature and succeeded in delighting the Bengalis more than some of their own films.

These were headed by Goutam Ghose's Dakhal (The Occupation), which dared to be only 72 minutes long but said more than many a two and a half hour epic (the length is supposed to be obligatory for general audiences, who apparently study the footage credit as if anything less than 10,000 feet is short measure). The

IN THE PICTURE

Occupation, the story of a gypsy girl who marries a farmer and is then dispossessed when he dies of snakebite, amply confirms the promise of Ghose's Hungry Autumn, a striking documentary about famine in Bengal, and My Land, his first feature, praised at the Bangalore Filmotsav in 1980. Its concerns were very much the same as a number of the Panorama entrants this year—the gap between Government promises about land for the dispossessed and what actually happens when grasping landlords and corrupt courts overturn new regulations. But no other film seemed to demonstrate such iniquities with such eloquent attention to character and detail. A fine performance from Mamata Shankar in the leading role and some beautiful cinematography (Ghose himself, who also wrote script and music) surely makes the film an international prospect.

So too, of course, is Shyam Benegal's new film, also made for the West Bengal Government and on much the same theme. The Ascent in many ways sums up several earlier Benegal films concerned with land reform, notably Night's End and The Churning. It is long, episodic and never really achieves the dialectic force of his very best work. But the epic scale—the story covers some ten years of one man's fight for his rights and is based on a case history—is effortlessly achieved, and Benegal proves once again that his fluency is not skin-deep. The Ascent arrived too late for the Panorama, in which his previous film Kalyug (The Machine Age) was shown. Produced, like Junoon, by Shashi Kapoor, it has been accused of being a Bombay version of Dallas but actually parallels a mythological story, if in rather lumpen fashion. Shashi Kapoor himself is excellent as the young scion of one of two warring industrialist families, but Benegal's efforts to find middle ground between popular and specialist cinema have not, in this case, paid great dividends.

Mrinal Sen, represented in the Panorama by the fractured and disappointing but by no means unwatchable Chaalchitra (Kaleidoscope), which was shown at Venice, was busy in Calcutta making another film, in the same studio, now almost derelict, which once housed Ray's The Music Room. The famous chandelier is still there, and an oil painting of the old nobleman hangs on the wall. But the studio has for years remained vacant. As yet untitled, Sen's film, taken from a story called The Trial, is (he says) another of his 'self-critical' essays-a blast at middle-class people who employ underage children and then fail to look after them properly. A houseboy from the country, employed by a Calcutta family, is found dead after a gas leak. Nobody is offici-



'The Secret of NIMH'.

ally to blame, but Sen's thesis is that everyone is, even the father who left him with the family in order to have him adequately clothed and fed. No one has really cared about the child.

Shashi Kapoor's other new production, 36 Chowringhee Lane, the first feature of Aparna Sen, one of Bengal's leading actresses and a familiar face in Ray films, was very well received and, though in English, is making money all over India. Its story of an ageing Anglo-Indian teacher, who lives in a dingy Calcutta flat and spouts Shakespeare to an inattentive class of schoolgirls, is overblown at two hours but contains a fine performance from Jennifer Kendal and much fresh detail. At ninety minutes, or perhaps even less, it would have made a perfect short story.

Finally, two films which, whatever their other shortcomings, use Indian classical and folk music to maximum advantage and might be welcome in the West for just that reason. The first is Umrao Jaan by Muzaffar Ali, the story of a famous Lucknow courtesan of the mid-19th century, played by Rekha, the Indian superstar, with no holds barred from melodrama, and lavishly costumed and designed. The second is Bapu's Thygayya, a life history of Thyagaraja Swami, the great Andhra poet and singer now regarded as a saint by his devotees. Bapu, the Telegu director, whose mythological Sita's Wedding charmed many and puzzled some at a recent London festival, allows the superb songs full rein. And when Indian music is so deployed, as in both these films, the familiar Bombay playback singers, with their tepid East-West orchestrations, are shown to be as hollow and repetitive as their detractors have often claimed.

DEREK MALCOLM

Disney disciples

A breakaway group of Disney animators attempts to recreate the Master's 40s style

Four years ago, Don Bluth was being hailed at Disney as the crown prince of the studio's animation department. Having entered the unit's training programme in 1971 and risen faster than any of his peers, Bluth was recognised as a leader to whom the torch would be passed by the retiring Snow White generation. But in September 1979, Bluth resigned from Disney, taking many of the brightest young artists with him. The exodus delayed production of the animated feature The Fox and the Hound by six months, and dealt a blow to the studio's efforts to replace its old guard.

It was the biggest upheaval in the Disney cartoon factory since the bitter animators' strike of 1941, but this one was underscored by an interesting irony. The tirelessly driven Bluth and his friends were not avantgardists bent on subverting the studio's artistic traditions. On the contrary, they quit because the new Disney was for them not Disneyish enough. Bluth's dream was to bring back the Snow White and Pinocchio era. He wanted the studio to produce animated features in the expensive and labourintensive style in which every scene shimmered with detailed movement. He wanted to leave behind the light comedy of The Aristocats and The Jungle Book and return to stories that contained raw danger and tragedy.

The former Disney artists set up Don Bluth Productions and began work on a film which they hope will look as though it came out of the Disney Studios of 1940. The Secret of NIMH is based on a bestselling American children's book with mystical overtones reminiscent of Watership Down. The efforts of a widowed mouse to move her family home from the path of a farmer's plough lead to a fateful contact with a race of rats of advanced intelligence.

Featuring the voices of Elizabeth Hartman, Hermione Baddeley, Dom DeLuise and Derek Jacobi, The Secret of NIMH will be released in the United States this summer by MGM-United Artists. Whether or not it will look as if it was made in 1940, NIMH will probably reverberate with the zeal of its creators. Bluth, a former Mormon missionary in Argentina, regularly screens the old Disney classics for his 70-odd animators and other artisans. 'We're trying to make sure that what Disney left us is not lost and maybe develop it a little further,' Bluth said. 'But before this, we have at least to catch up to where he was.'

Every step is being taken on The Secret of NIMH to avoid the graphic look that crept into animation, including Disney's, in the 1960s. The background artists use special brushes to create a soft look without hard edges. And Bluth will cut no stylistic corners. When an animal steps on a fallen branch, it will give way with a crunch. The characters will cast shadows. Bluth is even bringing back the multi-plane camera, a Disney invention of the 30s, that gave flat animation a live-action depth by arranging different parts of a scene on glass plates set at staggered levels. The technique takes so much planning, time and trouble that it has rarely been used at Disney in the last twenty vears.

Other animators may charge Bluth with obsession for an anachronistic style. But for an animator whose priority is telling a story, Bluth claims he is using the best style to reach his end. 'To let the audience become involved, they must be able to forget that what they are seeing was drawn. The technique is not important in itself, but it is crucial to keep the brush strokes invisible to the audience.'

Bluth began learning the style from its originators. After a year of college and with no formal art training, he worked for two years at Disney, part of the vast army employed on Sleeping Beauty, the 1959 release whose commercial failure signaled the end of the studio's lavish animated features. Before returning to Disney fulltime, Bluth's pursuits included the Mormon mission, running a musical comedy theatre group in Los Angeles with his brother, and working as a layout artist at a company making TV cartoons.

At Disney, Bluth soon attained

the rank of animator. He became a directing animator on The Rescuers and sole director of the animated sequences in Pete's Dragon, both released in 1977. The Disney brass then gave Bluth his own short film to both produce and direct. The Small One was a sentimental little story about a boy in the Middle East of the Roman Empire who must sell his pet donkey. The tale ends with the animal bearing Mary to Bethlehem. It attracted little critical notice, probably because it was released during Christmas 1978 with a reissue of Pinocchio. Although Variety noted: 'Any concerns about the continuation of the Disney tradition of excellence can now be dismissed. The Small One measures up fully to the high standards.'

The Small One and another short that Bluth and his friends made on their own while at Disney, Banjo the Woodpile Cat, which has been sold to American TV, were merely warm-ups for The Secret of NIMH. Banjo was made at nights at Bluth's home, and proved the possibility of making 30-minute film outside the Disney umbrella. Whether NIMH will satisfy an American moviegoing public which still flocks to old Disney reissues remains to be seen. If it does, a stylistic devolution may be on the way.

JIM SEALE

Backing a gambler

At work on a new thriller in Paris, James Toback talks about risk

Chasing risky propositions has never been one of Hollywood's strengths. And in the present mood of post-Heaven's Gate restraint, there would appear to be a positive paranoia associated with cost-cutting. One top studio executive warned directors of the dangers of straying over budget: 'We will swoop down like vultures on a dead body in the desert.' It seems positively schizophrenic, then, that James Toback has been entrusted with several million dollars for Exposed, an international thriller set across two continents. Examine the dangers. Toback's 'track record'—that barometer of industry credit—is to date, to put it mildly, indifferent.

Since The Gambler, his first and only novel (discounting a pornographic effort written under a pseudonym), was turned into an eminently respectable movie by Karel Reisz, Toback has directed two of his own original stories which later became screenplays. Fingers, a violent, voyeuristic tale starring Harvey Keitel as a would-be concert pianist who mixes with the Mob, was financed by the Fabergé people and

launched with almost no backing, certainly by today's inflated standards. The film's reviews, which varied from the sublime to the execrable, clearly merited greater efforts than those shown by the Us distributor, who had, Toback wearily explains, 'just run out of movie money'.

Love and Money, another tale of innocence and corruption, with Ray Sharkey, Ornella Muti and Klaus Kinski, remains 'on the shelf'. According to some it's 'unreleasable'. Toback says: 'Lorimar dumped it with Paramount and Paramount had put it into turnaround even before it went to Lorimar, so there was a double dislike.'

The past, however, does not particularly trouble the 37-yearold Toback, who is currently working on Exposed in Paris and New York, with the intriguing cast of Rudolph Nureyev-venturing out for only his second movie role after a traumatic début some four years ago in Ken Russell's Valentino-Nastassia Kinski, 'hot' following Tess, and Harvey Keitel again. But back to dangers. If Toback's record isn't cause for concern, then surely his method of work might be? He owns up: 'A liability I have is that I never work the script out thoroughly until the film starts shooting. Every day, I totally rewrite, a page at a time.

'Most writers turned directors are bad because they never make that necessary conversion. They still think in a literary way. I always want to kill my script and then reinvent it. Of course, that terrifies most financiers.'

Toback agrees that there was a certain boldness in the decision by MGM/United Artists to back him and his project, but says that this boldness has chiefly to do with 'backing a film that had been

touted around a while and hadn't been financed.' 'If you make a film like Whose Life Is It Anyway? [also from his current backers], it would seem to be a much safer move. If, however, a film like that fails then you are much more likely to take real heat. To go with a film like mine, which is a bit risky and difficult, can only lead to the accusation, if it fails, that a risk was taken and it didn't come off. People in Hollywood still like to think they are risk-takers—even though they are not, really.'

Toback points up where his true 'luck' lies. 'Without having made any money from the movies so far, I've been able, three times in a row, to do my own story, moving on to my own script and own direction-which must be unique. I think it has something to do with having a demonic personality. I scare them into saying "yes".' Toback, who took a degree at Harvard, has a colourful past which, on the work side, includes at different times stints as critic, journalist and English teacher (at New York's City College), and, on the personal, a ferocious taste for gambling and a failed marriage to a granddaughter of the Duke of Marlborough. The stuff of novels. And yet, despite the success of The Gambler, he has no desire to pursue novel-writing.

'Although I'm intimidated in working in an area where my favourite directors work, I think I have a real chance of being exceptional as a film-maker. I don't as a novelist. The thought of writing novels and putting them next to, say, Dostoyevsky, Balzac or Dickens is beyond my most obscene fantasies. The idea of trying to do something that so many other people have done better is depressing . . . '

QUENTIN FALK



James Toback on set with Nastassia Kinski.

Krull

Peter Yates and a Pinewood fantasy

Business was booming at Pinewood the day I went to investigate Krull, Peter Yates' first film to be made in Britain in fourteen years. Much of the main building was given over to Who Dares Wins, a thriller inspired by the Iranian Embassy siege, which had just achieved considerable publicity, including a front-page picture in The Times, with a scene of SAS men landing on the roof. Krull, then only in the fourth week of its five-month shooting schedule and not planned for release by Columbia till summer 1983, was quietly taking over eight of the twelve sound stages as well as the huge Bond 007 set. A ripe time for a strike, and Natke started one that very afternoon. Tomorrow no food would be provided on the studio lot

What was it like to be back? 'Very nice,' Yates said. 'The only difference is that now people give me what I ask for, as far as working's concerned. When I left only about two people would ever offer me any employment. It seems a pity one has to go to America for that to happen, but that's just the way of things.' He would very much like to go on working in Britain, always would have chosen that if he could.' I would prefer to have made Breaking Away in Nottingham.'

While Breaking Away would doubtless have been different set in Nottingham instead of Bloomington, Indiana, Krull, with its budget in excess of \$20m, is the kind of film that, given the same technical facilities, would probably be much the same wherever it was manufactured. A fantasy from an original screenplay by Stanford Sherman, it is enacted in no particular place or time and has so many special effects that the live action scenes being shot by Yates and Peter Suschitzky on two cameras on the main set are only the bottom layer of a composite image to be painstakingly arrived at later. Stephen Grimes' sets are like pieces of a mental landscape trying to elude identification: a castle hall not quite Arthurian, an enormous fireplace not really from Xanadu.

Although Krull is the name of another planet, the influence of the space age seemed confined to headgear, but who knows what the final impression will be. The fairy-tale characters range from the inevitable prince and princess (Ken Marshall and Lysette Anthony) to weird creatures who are not quite human and whom I was urged to forget I ever saw. The most extraordinary thing to me in fact was a glimpse of an empty sound stage with a fine carpeting of clods of turf and a very realistic painted backdrop of

IN THE PICTURE

night sky. The last month's filming will be on location in Italy, where Grimes has discovered actual places as surreal as this.

Visual effects supervisor Derek Meddings, whose credits include five Bond films and both Supermans, was working with a second unit on a scene involving a spider's web, huge segments of which have been constructed for the live action parts already shot. 'I don't think anybody's ever projected into a transparency before,' he said, 'and that's what we're doing here. One would normally shoot the centre part and then it would be drawn up and painted so that the surround would be a complete matte shot. Here we are inserting the live action into the miniature set by using large transparencies. We're front projecting on to that piece of screen and matching it in with the rest. If you do it the other way, you have to wait for several weeks before it's painted and shot, and then sometimes when you get it back it's not exactly what you wanted. This way you make your own mistakes, and you see them tomorrow.'

The web itself evoked almost anything you care to mention from a Freudian forest to the circulatory system or a diagram of outer space. In the centre a witchlike creature (Francesca Annis with rather a lot of make-up) floated in a kind of embryo. Were they aiming for wider implications? 'I just tried to make it look like a spider's web,' said Meddings, adding that they had examined lots of spider's webs on film before they started. Particular challenges confronting Meddings were horses with flaming hooves ('You can't set fire to your horses') and the metamorphosis of a man into several different animals in such a way that the whole process can be seen.

I asked Yates what led from Breaking Away (his personal favourite) and The Janitor to Krull. 'Every now and then,' he said, 'you have to make a large commercial picture because, although your career is advanced by the good films you make, you also have to remind people that you are capable of controlling large budgets and behaving as a field marshal or a craftsman rather than as an artist, and I enjoy big films every now and then too. Obviously, the films that one has more control over one enjoys most, but I don't mind. Every four or five years, it's nice to do one really big film like this.' ELIZABETH SUSSEX

Gay Cinema

A new cinema club against the grain in London's Soho

The Roxie Cinema Club in Wardour Street is Britain's first 'serious' gay cinema (the qualification 'serious' is necessary to distinguish it from the hardcore gay porn cinemas just a block away in Berwick Street). By the time SIGHT AND SOUND appears, the past tense may be more appropriate: in mid-February, after not quite two-and-a-half months, it was facing a financial crisis.

The original backer, a straight businessman who prefers not to be identified, wasn't making the profit he apparently anticipated and was planning to withdraw. The other two directors could not afford to carry the Roxie on their own (it barely breaks even) and were desperately searching for other sources of money. I hope they find it: the Roxie is an intelligently programmed, centrally located cinema (apart from the ICA, it is the only repertory cinema of any kind left in central

London), and it provides a much needed non-exploitative service for London's gay community.

It aims to be London's—not North / South / West London's gay cinema, but the Soho location is not without its problems. 'There are a lot of looney people about,' says manager David Wilson-Carr; in addition, some of the titles (e.g. Mädchen in Uniform) mislead what Russ Meyer has called the one-armed (male) viewer. Nor, he admits, is the cinema really attracting lesbians, who tend to associate the areathe Roxie, formerly the Essential, is just round the corner from the rash of hardcore grind theatres in Brewer Street-with hatred of women. Programming at the Roxie consists of films by lesbian and gay directors about lesbian and gay characters; documentaries about gay people; and films that appeal to what Wilson-Carr calls, slightly apologetically, 'a gay sensibility'. It opened with Curt McDowell's *Taboo*, followed by Mädchen in Uniform. The most successful run has been Philippe Valois' We Are One Man.

The most sensitive area of programming is the Hollywood camp category, liable to attack from both militant gay men and radical lesbians who see it, not surprisingly, as trading on a stereotyped and hostile view of women and of gender roles. But the Roxie cannot raise consciousness on its own: it needs to tap the 'commercial' gay audience if it is to meet its running costs (estimated at between £1,000 and £1,200 a week). With 3,500 members (on an average night, returning members make up about 25 per cent of the audience, more on Sunday matinées), it ought to survive. But, in the London film exhibition business, 'ought' is a concept of comparatively little value.

NICK RODDICK



'Krull': Francesca Annis in the giant spider's web.

Berlin

Fassbinder's prize-winning use of light and dark

Since the great days of the Berlin Film Festival in the 60s, when one could expect to see the latest Godard or Satyajit Ray film here, its chief interest has been as a place where one could watch a good selection of the New German Cinema. But those days are largely past, because so many German directors now prefer to wait for Cannes. So this year we got neither the new Wim Wenders film, nor the new Herzog. We did, however, get Fassbinder's The Desire of Veronika Voss, which took the Golden Bear and turned out to be the director's best film in several years. A character in it says, 'I am interested in losers, in people who are on the skids.' And I think Fassbinder is at his best when dealing with such types, which is why I prefer a film like this, about the decline and death of an ageing film star, to those with more or less triumphant heroines such as Maria Braun and Lili Marleen.

In Veronika Voss, Fassbinder's twenty-third feature not counting the sixteen television works, we are in the world of In a Year with 13 Moons, Petra von Kant and The Merchant of Four Seasons. The film is about dependency, exploitation and micro-politics. Loosely based on the life and fate of the UFA star Sybille Schmitz, who was in Dreyer's Vampyr and many German wartime films and who died a drug addict in the mid-50s, it tells the story of a star exploited by a woman doctor who supplies her with morphine on condition that the doctor be the beneficiary in her will. It is shot in high-gloss black and white, with the mirrors and glass partitions of Despair along which Fassbinder's camera prowls with relentless effect, observing his characters closely, but always, as it were, through a glass brightly.

'It's my job to wrench people's hearts,' says Veronika. It's Fassbinder's job, too, and for me he succeeded, although at the screening I attended the film was not well received. Veronika, brilliantly played by the theatre actress Rosel Zech, explains that the two secrets of the cinema are light and dark. And never has Fassbinder used these elements more effectively. Mannered? Certainly, but this is also a film about film-making. Veronika is first seen shooting a scene in which she gives herself body and soul to a doctor who supplies her with drugs; a scene which, of course, recurs later in 'real life'.

But Veronika's dependency is not one way. Fassbinder has always been interested in the reciprocity of sado-masochistic relationships, and just as Veronika is dependent on her doctor, so



'Veronika Voss': Hilmar Thate, Rosel Zech.

a sports writer, a chance acquaintance, grows increasingly dependent on her. 'The cinema is a dream factory,' Veronika says, and the film is shot like a dream, or a nightmare, all the more frightening because of the whiteness of the décor and lighting (I was reminded, in this respect, of Melville's chapter on the whiteness of Moby Dick). Perhaps in the end Fassbinder does go too far when he has Veronika die on Good Friday ('You've been bearing the cross for a long time'), but then the whole film is bigger than life. Nick Ray might have said that all cinema should be bigger than life.

Dependency was also the subject of Pierre Granier-Deferre's Une Étrange Affaire. Winner of the 1981 Prix Delluc, it is certainly this uneven director's best film. Michel Piccoli is superb as an ambiguously Machiavellian efficiency expert who is called in to revive the fortunes of a department store, and who does so by seducing its employees into abject loyalty through a combination of firmness, duplicity and charisma. If anyone deserved the Best Actor award it was Piccoli, who in fact shared it with the Swede Stellan Skarsgaard, who plays the halfwit in Hans Alfredson's morality tale, A Simple-minded Murderer.

Lebanese/Tunisian/Belgian co-production Rendezvous in Beirut had an added poignancy in Berlin since it deals with a couple separated by the wall between East and West Beirut. Rather clumsily made with too many endings, it nevertheless contains a moving sequence in which the lovers are reduced to making audio-cassettes in order to communicate with each other.

Britain was represented in the Competition by Chris Petit's An Unsuitable Job for a Woman. Very much a second film, it seemed bent on proving that Petit could handle a straight story, in this case a P. D. James novel, and thereby get out of the 'experimen-

tal' ghetto in which Radio On had seemed to place him. But it is recognisably a work by the same director: it shares the visual and dramatic ambiguity of the first film, while being at the same time much more accessible. Billie Whitelaw, in a supporting role, would have been my candidate for the Best Actress award. She's so good in fact that she seriously undermines Pippa Guard, the nominal heroine.

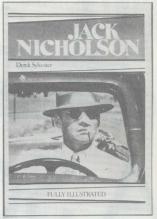
Although most of its best entries had already been seen in London, Rotterdam or last year at Cannes, the Forum of Young Films once again provided Berliners with an excellent programme. There was also a section this time devoted to women's films, 'Frauen machen Film', as if this were some great novelty. The best women's films that I saw, however, were not found here. The New German Film division had two works by Jeanine Meerapfel: one, a documentary, The Land of My Parents (the director was born in Argentina of German-Jewish parentage), made the telling point that until Berliners solve the problem of their Turkish immigrant workers, they will never rid themselves of guilt over their treatment of the Jews. The other, Malou, a feature fiction film, was also autobiographical: Ingrid Caven plays Jeanine's mother and, in one sense or another, Grischa Huber plays Jeanine herself.

Then there was Clare Peploe's Couples and Robbers, a British half-hour short shown in the Information section. For a first film, script, casting and direction of actors were all highly accomplished. The story is too good to give away-and yet will anyone show a film of this length? One answer is, I know, cable television in America, which is one reason the film was produced. But let's hope it turns up soon in Britain, and even more, let's hope that Ms Peploe is able to make a feature.

RICHARD ROUD

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A SCAN OF THE

SIMON PERRY

Behind the diplomatic fracas which erupted in 1980 between Britain and Saudi Arabia over Anthony Thomas' drama-documentary, Death of a Princess, lay a reason for Saudi sensitivity only indirectly related to the film's television transmission in the UK. The problem was that the broadcast in Britain automatically meant that within a few days the film would be watched in the Middle East by many leading Arab families—off videocassettes.

It had become common practice among oil-rich Arab households to install a servant in a London hotel with a video-recorder and instructions to tape British TV programmes round the clock. Regular shipments of cassettes were sent home by private jet. When the latest consignment of portable entertainment contained Death of a Princess, the ensuing incident neatly demonstrated (piracy aspect notwithstanding) the power of what the jargon calls narrowcasting.

In Britain, two years on, homevideo is now a familiar phenomenon. The United Kingdom is second only to Scandinavia in its rate of response to domestic hardware salesmanship. Out of 20,000,000 homes with TV sets, about 1,500,000 are currently equipped with videorecorders. With 7½ per cent coverage, the British market lags significantly behind Scandinavia's 10 per cent but is well ahead of the US, where precise estimates are hard to make but where present penetration is officially reckoned as approaching 4 per cent. Last year saw a boom in the UK and several other Western countries—notably Japan and West Germany-which confounded even the gung-ho predictions typical of the new video age. Not unduly optimistic guesswork envisages that the British market will double in size this year, and will have attained 25 per cent of its theoretical potential by 1985: some 5.000,000 homes.

So what does it all mean? Growth business for the hardware and blank tape

manufacturers, certainly. Also, a whole new business arena for the shrewder contenders among the prerecorded software distributors, those fast proliferating licensees of feature films good and bad, TV specials and classics, concert recordings, sports and instructional programmes, and pornography. As befits a new medium, the middle-men-the purveyors of the goods-on the face of it stand to gain the most. Producers, too, of course stand to profit from the appearance of a new route by which their goods can reach consumers. So far, so promising, at least financially. Up to now video has generated excitement primarily for its profitable passive capacity, as a carrier of material initially devised for other audiovisual media. For the consumer, it mainly offers more of the same, more accessibly. But is that all it means? Or can the science of video bequeath something more than takeaway movies?

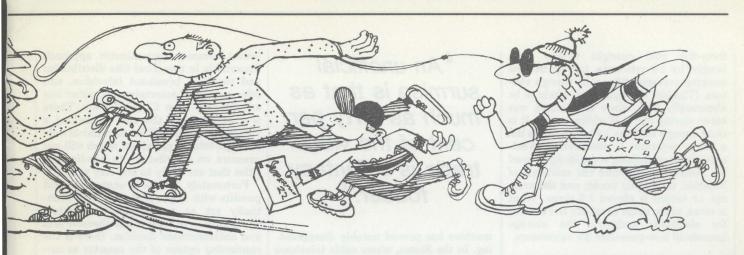
No medium is truly passive. A combination of technical capabilities and commercial considerations create for workers in a given medium both freedoms and disciplines that are unique to it. The evolution of literature has been shaped in part by printing techniques and publishing practices; painting is affected by the development of materials and the management of galleries; cinema is strongly influenced by optical and chemical technology as well as by distribution systems. Video, as a comparable form of art and means of communication, will evolve according to similar principles, its creative growth nudged, fostered and in part determined by electronic technology on the one hand and marketing methodology on the other. Video is not the first audiovisual medium, but its emergent technical functions and the way in which it reaches and relates to its audience afford it an identity potentially distinct from those of its forerunners, theatrical film and broadcast or cable television.

How the creative sector will respond to the challenges of the new medium can only be guessed at. Some hints can be found in such programming as has already been devised and produced spe-

cifically for videogram release. Examples to date are apt to divide into the highly abstract (pop music promotions) and the resolutely practical ('how to ...' material). The latter seem to be efficient, if uninspired. The former, at best, owe a good deal to the more stylish TV commercials and are graphically dazzling; at worst, they are mere hollow gimmickry of a kind all too easily accomplished with the help of a modern vision-mixing desk. Flights of future fancy aside, however, it is appropriate at this particular moment-with the videodisc player at last on the point of joining the videocassette machine on markets throughout the West-to examine the current state of the business and draw some conclusions as to how it could mature over the next few years. What departures and what limitations does video promise for the film-maker and for the viewer?

The prerecorded videocassette business is remarkably buoyant, the medium's appeal to date being based almost entirely on its ability to deliver feature films into the home on demand. The 1980 US actors' strike indicated the earning potential from 'ancillary' markets as perceived by trade unions and major producers. British Equity has now successfully sought a similar slice of the videogram cake for its members. And not a moment too soon, from the employees' point of view. Now that rental and exchange schemes have become the adopted norm among dealers (after considerable initial resistance), returns to producers are beginning to compare favourably with those from other forms of exhibition. Trade sources claim that a distributor can expect to move—that is, sell in to retailers for onward sale or rent-between 15,000 and 20,000 videogram copies of a strong film in a year. That can yield royalties to the film's producer of close to £100,000.

Predictably, there are plenty of permutations of the advances, commissions and duplications costs involved, with almost every distributor operating a different deal. One basic difference for a



VIDEO INDUSTRY

producer is defined by whether a film is licensed by him directly to a video distributor or effectively sub-licensed by a film distributor who has acquired all rights but is not himself in the videogram distribution business. In the second case, two commissions may be deducted. Royalties paid by video distributors vary between 10 and 25 per cent of the wholesale price of each cassette sold. The standard retail price of a feature film on tape is about £40; the average wholesale price is about £20. (Prices have remained more or less constant since the inception of the domestic video market, which represents a steady fall in real, inflationadjusted terms.)

Broadly speaking, the smaller independent distributors pay smaller royalties, while companies with more clout and more outlets can offer the higher percentages to producers. The latter tend to be video divisions of established film conglomerates: Thorn EMI, CIC, Warner Bros. Brent Walker. But tougher producers have begun to buck when a conglomerate holds all rights in a film, releases it on video through its own division, and charges a 'distribution' commission of 35 or 40 per cent against the video royalty for what may be no more than an automatic, in-house arrangement. Beneficial to a producer is an escalation deal proffered by some independent distributors, whereby the royalty percentage increases with sales.

Thorn EMI is generally reckoned as Britain's video market leader, with a huge inventory to exploit of titles owned by EMI Films, including all the Ealing

Studios classics and British Lion product. Equally, the major Hollywood companies are losing no time in putting their celluloid assets out to work on tape, either through video releasing mechanisms of their own or via trusted local licensees around the world. Warner Video and CIC Video—the latter, like its theatrical parent (now UIP), handling Paramount and Universal pictures—are both among Britain's top five distributors. Disney Video, which releases via Rank Video in the UK, is sticking so far to a 'lease only' rule for its tapes, an insistence formerly adopted by Warner also, but abandoned when found to be heavily unpopular with dealers. Twentieth Century-Fox is building a wholly owned subsidiary network, Magnetic Video, worldwide. United Artists' product is licensed in Britain to Intervision, the first independent into the field in 1978 and now operator of probably the fattest and most eclectic catalogue. The majors all boast massive software reserves: Columbia reportedly has 3,000 features and 10,000 TV programmes to draw upon. At home a treasure trove of television currency is at the disposal of the BBC, provided its Home Video division can reach agreement with the unions.

One of the more meteoric careers in video distribution to date has been carved by Guild Home Video, a Peterborough-based subsidiary of the Swedish publishing and business systems giant, Esselte. Within twelve months of its birth, the company's profitability earned it a place alongside Britain's big-

gest names by the end of 1981, with almost 8,000 outlets for films licensed directly from independent producers, in particular from US 'minimajors' such as Lorimar, Melvin Simon and Filmways. Guild's incursion into the market has been steered by local managing director Iain Muspratt, whose keenly informed, hard-headed approach typifies the new breed of successful video merchant. The backbone of Guild's catalogue is features which have enjoyed a healthy cinema life. But Muspratt shares with most independents the firm view that the videocassette market is not simply an extension of the theatrical or television markets: the evidence of several better-than-average videogram releases of 'failed' films indicates that it has an embryonic character of its own. The key lies in marketing techniques, and few would dispute that the prevailing level of cinema promotion leaves ample scope for more imaginative exploitation of the product, quite apart from consumer considerations of access and cost.

A very rough social profile of the British market, as judged by Muspratt and others, finds about half of video's software consumers squarely in the middleearning, middle class bracket—C1 and C2 on the statisticians' scale. Wealthy and professional grades A and B account for about 25 per cent, as do lower-earning and unemployed grades D and E. If popular response to such relatively expensive leisure goods seems unexpectedly positive in a deeply recessional time and country, it is worth reflecting that Americans flocked to movie theatres during the Depression. More precisely, the 'black economy' of cash businesses and high disposable incomes, and unemployment with its hallmarks of redundancy payments and time to kill, are both aspects of the recession which create just the right conditions to encourage splashing out on a new toy.

The shape of the market in more detail can be divined from a sample of 100 cassettes surveyed last year: fifty-five were used by dealers for rental and/or exchange purposes; of the remaining



Video shop front in Charing Cross Road.

forty-five sold outright twenty were bought by UK residents, ten by Britons working overseas, fifteen by foreign visitors. (The last two figures are likely to be abnormally high, since the sample was taken during Royal Wedding week.) It is clear enough that the £40 price-tag is not a heavy deterrent to the average Westerner from exercising a compulsive need for possessions. Despite the existence of libraries, we all buy books; and the average LP record is played 1.2 times. What is more, video helps to satisfy the craving for electronic gadgetry: the average household now possesses 3.5 calculators.

Compared to the brightly packaged film titles to be found on teeming shelves in the new high street video stores, other kinds of programming have made only a tiny impact up to now on the majority of cassette-happy customers. Anything other than straight transfer of a movie on to tape generally involves a video company in some measure of production, and few have been geared up or confident enough to stand the creative and financial risks. VCL, a small company that has been bravely active in both production and distribution since homevideo's 'early days' (the late 70s) claims that its music specials-recordings of specially staged concerts and lifts from TV shows-represent a worthwhile investment. Sport, too, seems to be an interest area ripe for development.

The fact is, however, that the limited technology of the videocassette assigns to it, as a medium, essentially passive status. That status does not stimulate the creative juices; it does not invite radical expansion of audiovisual thinking. Cassettes merely reproduce linear forms of presentation familiar from film and television. That said, public reception of the prerecorded cassette has far exceeded expectations. The hardware was originally envisaged and launched primarily as a facility for recording offair (time-shifting TV programmes) and making home-movies. What has happened is that it has also had the prerecorded market to itself much longer than was expected.

Laser technology developed by Philips more than a decade ago looked then as if it would deliver a videodisc player on to the market very shortly. The replay-only videodisc would provide what television could not-feature films at will, porn of all cores, minority entertainment and specialised educational material. But there were technical setbacks and delays. Two years ago Philips had perfected a player with a range of functions which revealed astonishing horizons for creative use of the medium. But masspressing of the discs suffered from a worse than 90 per cent failure rate. While the boffins struggled, the less sophisticated and more expensive videocassette recorder made inroads into the playback market. RCA's introduction in the US of a mechanical disc player with playback capabilities barely more impressive than those of a cassette

An unofficial surmise is that as much as forty per cent of the video trade is in fantasy fodder.

machine has proved notably disappointing. In the States, where cable television fulfils much of the demand for feature films and alternative entertainment programming, video hardware is more apt than elsewhere to be acquired for recordreplay applications rather than for replay-only purposes. Even so, RCA was well-advised to refrain from launching its Selectavision disc player in European markets, where it would almost certainly have been assessed by consumers as a package containing just one of the functions of a cassette machine and no additional characteristics of its own; and, as such, overpriced.

Now, at last, two rival videodisc systems are expected to be introduced domestically in Britain and a number of other countries by the end of the year. Philips' LaserVision (at one time true to the company's slogan and simply years ahead—four, in fact—of competitors) has been joined in the race by the ubiquitous Japanese Victor Company, whose VHS cassette format is clear winner in the tape field. JVC's VHD (video high density) disc system will probably be the first across the line unless Philips can overcome its replication problems, reported as still responsible for a 50 per cent rejection rate at the time of writing. In contrast to the strategy applied to initial marketing of the cassette hardware, the unveiling of the disc must be a launch of hardware and software equally, since a disc machine's primary interest lies in what is available to be played on it. The research and planning undertaken by companies determined to see the disc hold its own in an already partly plundered market are important pointers to the immediate future for both producers and consumers.

Research suggests that the bulk of the early disc audience will be young, and biased slightly lower down the social scale than the present cassette audience. One survey puts 62 per cent of the primary target market in C2 and D grades, with presumably decent cash incomes and low-rent (not mortgaged) homes. That would seem to spell good news for thriller pictures, kung-fu, sexploitation, TV comedies and sport; bad news for 'difficult' films, foreign material and music for minority tastes such as jazz and the classics-at least until the market has developed sufficiently to support loss leaders and unprofitable 'prestige' programming. It will be depressing indeed if videograms merely endorse the lowest common denominator approach discernible in theatrical film distribution and much of broadcast television, and offer a range of entertainment rather less adventurous than Channel Four. There is a danger that the cost of making a videodisc master will be economical only for high-volume pressings, which will put pressure on distributors to handle only titles that are likely to sell very well.

Fortunately for those consumers and pundits with hopes that video will eventually act as a genuinely variegated, alternative or at least comprehensive arts and entertainment medium, there is the continuing option of the cassette as carrier of more specialised material. Tape duplication can be virtually as costeffective for a run of 100 as for a run of 1,000,000, and wiping and re-using a tape that fails to sell is cheaper than reducing and remaking a disc. It was refreshing, none the less, to learn that Thorn EMI Video Programmes, which has adopted the VHD disc as its exclusive format, has been buying up Eastern European films for its disc catalogue alongside more obviously safe bets, and to hear the company's head of acquisitions, Garry Pownall, declare some months ago: 'The customer I'm specifically interested in is the fanatic.'

Further intelligence gleaned by the major companies tells them to expect disc hardware to penetrate 2 per cent of colour TV homes in the first year, 4 per cent within three years. Prospective customers are twice as likely to rent a disc player as to buy one (for about £350). But the low purchase price of the software (probably £15) makes it more attractive to buy outright than cassettes. Choices of software within a household will mostly rest with men, although women will represent a substantial

minority making decisions in 30 per cent of cases. Research particularly points up the direct competition that disc and cassette machines will pose for each other. The latter's ability to record as well as play back is widely cited as its most telling advantage, and one that the disc player will be hard pressed to counteract. The disc's superior picture quality and stereo sound seem to impress the higher social grades, but these account for only a small proportion of likely consumers. Special functions like slow motion, rapid search-and-find and stop-frame, formerly

felt to be the province of the disc, are now available on the more costly cassette models.

Without any single compelling feature

Without any single compelling feature of its own, the only way for the disc to score significantly over tape may be through its software. And in the present state of the market that will most likely mean carrying 'must' movies that cassettes do not—that is, newer blockbusters. It would make no sense for distributors of strong product to release it on disc only; but a pattern could well emerge whereby titles appear on cassette only some time after being launched on disc, in an attempt to accord the disc player a degree of cachet.

Cassettes will carry one secret weapon-pornography, which the major corporations are inclined to shun as bad for their images. A great deal of the porn currently available is semi-illicit, underthe-counter stuff, so official statistics mean little. An unofficial surmise is that as much as 40 per cent of the video trade is in fantasy fodder. It serves as breadand-butter for many retailers and helps to offset problems of over-stocking and unmovable titles which were among lessons learned by some dealers from the ostensible bonanza year 1981. The disc business will not be underpinned in the same way. Britain is reportedly taking an initiative on videogram censorship, or classification as those concerned prefer it called. A working party administered by the British Board of Film Censors was set up last year to examine methods of consumer guidance. If tapes and discs have to be rated in future, one effect could be the creation of a prosperous black market in unclassified material.

The immediate future, then, will see the software war fought predominantly with redeployed standard forms of entertainment, with feature films as the big guns. Moreover, by a kind of reverse osmosis, it is possible that video technology will repay some of its debt to the cinema by contributing to the survival, and even perhaps the revival, of theatrical presentation. Video projection—big-screen pictures generated from tape or disc-has so far produced results that give cinematographers seizures and charm virtually no one working in or devoted to film. Picture brightness, depth of contrast, definition and colour values are all vastly inferior to most 35mm projection. But the science is developing, and a new GEC model is said to throw a genuinely impressive picture. The trouble is that it costs £30,000, while film projection can be installed for £20,000. The economics of the business do not quite make sense at the moment, but EMI has converted ten of its smaller cinemas to video systems over the past four years—using cheaper units, of course, and undeterred by audience complaints at the outset.

As an especially encouraging sign amid persistent cinema closures in the UK, EMI last year opened two entirely new screens with video projection in the unused dress circle area of a Cirencester bingo hall. Further such ventures are planned for similar sites. The advantages of a video system are its economy of space (the projector is usually mounted in the auditorium ceiling), low maintenance costs and, for distributors, a dramatic reduction in freight charges: a videogram weighs and measures a fraction of a pile of film cans. For all these reasons, video projection also commends itself strongly for in-flight movies. Video cinemas attached to shops and pubs could be the community film venues of the future. Eventually there may be no need to ship the software out at all, as exhibitors select their local programming from signals available via cable or satellite.

It would not be hard to devise a TV set which could not be switched off and which could observe the viewer.

Back on the homevideo front, everyone in the industry is well aware that feature films constitute a diminishing resource in the long term. The more robust distribution companies are already making occasional investments in feature production, though the amounts are as yet much too small to make the difference between a film being or not being made. Guild Home Video, for example, is prepared to put up between £50,000 and £100,000 by way of an advance on UK rights, provided the script and cast promise a strongly commercial piece of work. For such a film, Guild's contribution to the budget is likely to be a drop in the ocean. In time, global presales of video rights could grow in significance. But the crucial consideration is that the world's current store of old and middle-aged movies will gradually become played out; and even if the volume of production were to swell enormously, it is hard to believe that enough good pictures would be made each year to meet the demand that homevideo has

The video industry's need to build for the more distant future-in both financial and creative terms, for the two will go hand in hand-calls for an early commitment to production investment that is more judicious and more imaginative than simply chipping into feature films. Thorn EMI and other companies are already producing 'leisure learning' packages that are relatively inexpensive to make and well-suited to the videodisc's flexibility (superior to that of the cassette) as a demonstration medium. One side of a disc can be 'read' either as an hour of moving pictures or as 54,000 'pages' of still frames, every one of which is coded and can be located in a matter of seconds.

A disc can be designed to contain an exhaustive wealth of information, from which the viewer extracts what he or she needs. Learning a language is but one example where, with its facility to combine or cross-refer instantaneously between visual, aural and graphic material, the disc could prove to be a unique aid. Its capacity for response to the viewer's wishes is, in fact, where video's uniqueness as a medium lies. Unlike all other media, the disc can present a bundle of material out of which the viewer, in effect, builds his or her own programme. The import of the material is no longer finite; the medium is no longer passive, and nor is the audience.

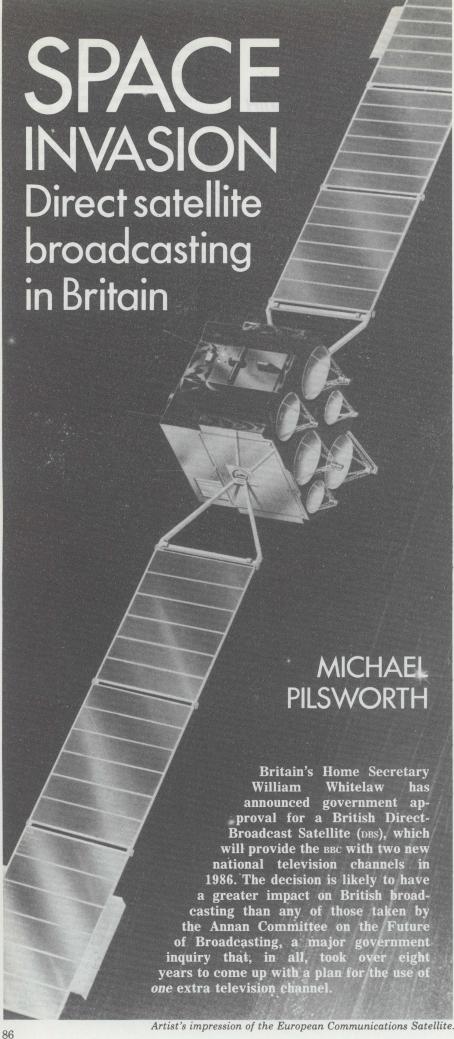
Prevalent thinking in the business is that video's real growth area is what is known as interactive programming.

The principle can be applied equally to entertainment, though only limitedly to material originally produced for other media: a fully interactive video entertainment must be specially devised. (A limited interactive function applicable to, say, a feature film arises from the disc's ability to carry more than one soundtrack, and thus offer dialogue in several languages for selection at will.) An example of a fully interactive rock concert disc programme was outlined to this writer recently. A live performance by The Who (say) is recorded on film or tape using a multicamera set-up. The resultant disc comprises not one but a number of vision tracks running in parallel. Track one carries a fully edited version of the concert made by the director; track two is devoted exclusively to Roger Daltrey, the group's singer; track three concentrates on the guitar-playing and antics of Pete Townshend; track four is for John Entwistle fans or for students of Kenny Jones' drumming; track five does not feature the band, but offers a 'conceptualisation' of the music made up of interpretative visuals; track six is a graphic rendering of the printed music and lyrics. The viewer can opt for one of the tracks throughout, or switch between them as desired. Stereo audio balance can be tinkered with in the same way. Playing back has become playing with.

Sporting events can be similarly presented to allow scope for spectators' own creativity. Separate tracks of a tennis game disc follow each individual player; others are continuous wideshots from different angles; one track of a boisterous McEnroe match might consist of memorable shots of the umpire and reactions from the crowd, Wimbledon board members and the Princess of Wales. Needless to say, the opportunities to improve the efficacy of audiovisual educational material are numerous, in that an interactive programme permits each student to suit a course of instruction to his or her particular learning pace and skill. In its most fundamental form, interactive video is Space Invaders and the like. Its most sophisticated applications start to take shape when the disc is linked to the microprocessor technology of home computers. For the future, audiovisual creators and audience will have to put aside their training in purely linear forms of

communication.

1984, when George Orwell predicted homes literally dominated by telescreens, is only two years away. It would not be hard, given the capabilities of modern electronics, to devise a TV set which could not be switched off, and which could observe the viewer. Fortunately, the development of the video industry is not as yet showing signs of veering towards such totalitarian ambition. It is healthily embarked on a gentler course. As Variety declared earlier this year: 'Put at its highest, the disk portends a new age of visual literacy.'



SIMILAR IN MANY WAYS to the existing satellites that bounce our telephone conversations around the world, a DBS simply bounces TV signals back to earth. But in doing this, it amplifies them so that the returning signals can be received on small dish-shaped aerials about 90 cm across. At this diameter the dishes can be installed in people's homes, enabling them to receive TV signals directly from the satellite.

The concept of a DBS was first outlined over fifteen years ago, but because of uncertainty over the uses of such systems and over technical problems, there was little progress. In 1966 Norman Collins (the progenitor of ITV) was one of the few British broadcasters who favoured the expansion of satellite broadcasting capability. But his vision was not exploited, and capital was diverted to the introduction of colour transmissions. As time went on, direct broadcasting by satellite was somehow pushed aside in the welter of protracted arguments over the fourth channel, accountability, access, community video and cable. Gradually, however, conditions for the successful deployment of the DBS were being satisfied.

British Aerospace is now certain that it can solve the few remaining technical problems involved in building the new satellite-mounted transmitters. In order to operate a transmitter powerful enough to broadcast direct to people's homes, the satellite has to convert solar energy into electricity. The size and weight of a satellite increases with the amount of power needed: for a powerful fivechannel DBS like the British Aerospace 'L-Sat' design, the solar panels will have to be 55 metres long. And to get these new, heavier satellites into orbit, more powerful launching devices will have to be used. These are now available: the Space Shuttle can insert heavy payloads into earth orbit at relatively low cost. And in Europe too, the European Space Agency has developed its own heavy launch vehicle, called ARIANE. So, in technical terms at least, DBSs are now a viable proposition.

International agreement about DBSs was reached in 1977 at the World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC) in Geneva. Each European country was allocated five DBS channels for national television broadcasting. Following that meeting, British broadcasters decided not to press ahead with DBS. Since TV reception in the UK is very good over the whole country there seemed to be little incentive to use a satellite. But the frequencies remained to be used. The development of domestic satellite reception equipment initially posed some problems, but now it seems that most of these have been solved. Domestic dish aerials, 90 cms in diameter, made of fibreglass with a reflective coating, can be mass produced from between £150 and £200 and will receive both British and European satellite signals. They can be roof mounted, put at the bottom of the garden or on the side of a house.

Reception from test transmissions has been much better than expected and maintenance would not be a critical problem. Rental companies such as Granada believe that they could provide viewers with a satellite reception service for about £10 per month. Rental or purchase of a dish aerial could be avoided by using cable services. In this case, a cable operator such as Rediffusion would be in a position to offer satellite channels to cable subscribers. Though only 14 per cent of homes are currently on cable, a further 10 per cent are passed by existing cable and could be hooked up for little extra cost. Pay-Cable, recently licensed by the Home Office on an experimental basis, is likely to be deregulated in the autumn. This could provide the impetus for further development of cable systems, particularly in urban areas. Domestic reception would probably be cable-based in urban areas, but in rural areas would rely predominantly on the use of individual dish aerials.

The cost of building and launching a direct-broadcast satellite is enormous: about £100m for a two-channel system. Each satellite lasts for about seven years (the limiting factor is the amount of fuel it carries in order to maintain its position in orbit). Accordingly an operational broadcasting system would need to launch a new satellite every seven years. In addition, a spare satellite would have to be placed in orbit in case the main satellite failed, and a back-up satellite would have to be kept in readiness on the ground in case of a second failure.

Taking all these costs into account, and spreading them over the channels available and the life of each satellite, the cost per channel per year (if, say, they were leased) would be some £10-16m. To this would have to be added the cost of programming, from a minimum of perhaps £10m to a maximum of perhaps £100m. The annual costs for each of these two new satellite channels are, then, roughly comparable in scale with the overall cost of the Fourth Channel. If one assumes an audience penetration of 1.5m, the cost per home of a Pay Channel would be about £1 per week: not an unreasonable amount.

These four developments, then, in technology, frequency allocation, dom-estic reception and leasing arrangements have combined to make DBSs a viable proposition. Even so, the broadcasters have been divided on the merits of developing DBS systems. The IBA, not unreasonably, is protective towards its two fledgling services: Channel Four and Breakfast TV. Two new channels competing for viewers in 1986 might test the ITV system to the point of destruction. Even so, there are signs that the IBA is now changing its position on DBS. The BBC, on the other hand, has seen in DBS systems a welcome source of additional revenue. Lumbered with an increasingly unwieldy revenue collection system, the BBC has been short of cash since inflation began to eat into the licence fee and Your own satellite downlink . . . "The Forsyte Saga", "Hancock's Half Hour", European sport, musical spectaculars . . . of course you'd pay a pound a week."

since the natural buoyancy furnished by the growth in set ownership disappeared with saturation of the market.

The possibility of bringing in extra money through a Pay-Satellite system is one that the BBC is taking very seriously. A subscriber service based on a coded (scrambled) signal could attract big audiences. As already noted, the break-even point for a £70m per year service would be about 1.5m homes paying £1 per week. And by filling the schedules with repeats ('The Best of the BBC'), US imports, movies, sport and co-production material, the programming costs could conceivably be cut to around £20m per year (50 hours per week at £9,000 per hour). With the lease of the channel costing £14m, the BBC could be in the happy position of balancing recurrent costs of about £34m per year with income of about twice that: and the extra £36m or so will prove very useful. Will people pay £1 per week for the service? Your own satellite downlink, Dallas stripped every night for a week, The Forsyte Saga, Steptoe & Son, Hancock's Half Hour, European sport, musical spectaculars, international events: of course you'd pay a pound a week for it.

The BBC's conversion to satellites has given a broadcasting seal of approval to DBS systems which is otherwise notably lacking. The IBA is cautious; the commercial TV contractors are divided. Big rental companies (Granada, Thames via EMI) see major advantages in DBS; major producers (Thames, ATV/ACC) are looking at software possibilities; but the majority of the ITV companies see DBS, correctly, as a threat.

The real pressure on the Home Office has come via the Department of Industry (DOI). The potential industrial rewards inherent in the rapid development of DBS systems are enormous. Surveys carried out on behalf of British Aerospace, and confirmed by their men in the field, indicate that the total market for communications satellites in the next fifteen years is some £2 billion. The big demand for DBS systems will be in the less developed countries where the advantages of instantaneous national coverage are highly significant. But with every European country also looking towards its

own five-channel DBS system, the total market for large satellites is of the order of 110-115 systems.

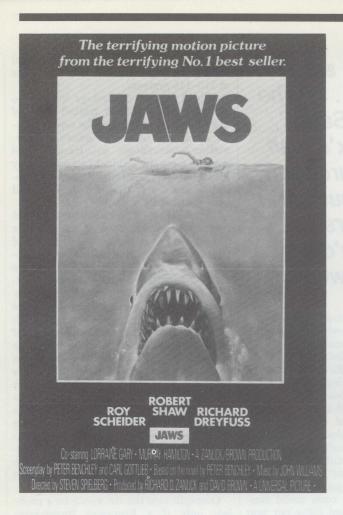
A lead in DBS technology would also assure a lead in other related areas of information technology. The DOI is pushing hard for British dominance in information technology in Europe and support from the Cabinet (encouraged by Mrs Thatcher) is strong. And the potential rewards for the British film and television industry are very attractive.

The 1977 WARC agreement allocated frequencies on the basis of the coverage of national areas, and assumed the use of the prevailing standard of a 90 cm receiving dish. Even so, the nature of the satellite footprint meant that some overspill was inevitable. Since 1977, improvements in receiving-dish technology have meant that overspill areas are now much greater. And by the simple expedient of using larger diameter dishes, such as might be used as community receivers, or by cable distribution companies, the footprint size can be doubled or even trebled. What this means is that European DBS satellites are in theory able to provide some form of signal to the whole of Europe. This possibility has two implications: overspill into the UK; and overspill for the UK into Europe. It is the latter that interests the advertisers and marketing companies in Britain.

Overspill into the UK would be a problem only if a European broadcaster decided to broadcast in English. But as one of the features of DBSs is that they can carry up to seven different sound channels for each television picture, and as a great deal of what is already shown on commercial TV in Europe is produced in English in its original form (US TV series, feature films), there is a distinct possibility that at least one commercial broadcaster will be tempted to try to tap some of the £500m annual TV advertising revenue that the ITV companies at present command. As even a tiny country such as Luxembourg has five channels to play with (and in the case of Luxembourg no requirement whatever for national TV coverage other than on its existing transmitters), it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that it could spare one channel for the commercial exploitation of the British market, such as it has done with its radio frequency on 208 MW. Indeed there are indications that this is being considered, despite vociferous denials by Radio-Tele-Luxembourg.

But the potential rewards that await a British satellite service are much greater. There is an enormous amount of frustrated advertising demand in Europe (by some estimates as much as £2,000m per year). This is the result of the severe restrictions placed on television advertising in Europe. Taken together with the high levels of cable usage (e.g. 64 per cent penetration in Belgium, 55 per cent in the Netherlands, 35 per cent in Germany), the prospects for a DBS service that combines British software (programmes and advertising) and British

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EXPLO

Steven Kovács considers

xploitation films grew out of the Bmovies that played along with the main feature during the heyday of the studios. Since then they have been called action pictures or low-budget movies, but always they have been second rate. They used to be produced by small independent companies and were aimed at lower class audiences. They were dumped on the market in a multiple release pattern instead of being afforded a 'first-run' release in a major city. And they had lesser known names as stars, whether they were up-andcoming TV names or faded actors who could no longer command the fees they did during their prime.

These elements no longer define the genre. For in the last decade a number of expensive films have been made by the major studios which are exploitation films. Conversely, independent companies have begun making films using the formulas of the majors, such as employing high-priced stars with the purpose of making better (read more commercial) exploitation films. This obscuring of boundary lines between the major studio films and independent productions is but the end result of the break-up of the studio system which began in the late 1940s. It is the final qualitative manifestation of the change in the infrastructure of the American film industry. The major studios and the independent companies have come to resemble each other as funding and distribution entities, relying on teams of independent producers to deliver the product. And in the process of imitating

each other their movies have begun to look more and more alike. Indeed, with a few exceptions, the Hollywood film today is the exploitation film.

The term exploitation originally referred to the way in which the producer used his audience to his own financial advantage. He exploited his viewers by failing to give them their money's worth, by refusing them the pleasure of the entertainment they paid for. All moviegoers are consumers of goods of entertainment. Audiences of exploitation films, however, receive a qualitatively different treatment. They become the objects, even victims, of the producers. They are duped into seeing movies which promise to be something they are not. The effort to mislead the public has increased dramatically from the days of the studio system to the present age of corporate-financed independent productions. Advertising today has been largely responsible for the proliferation of the exploitation film throughout the industry.

Because movies have always existed as events to be marketed, a certain amount of promotion, of salesmanship, has always been used to attract the largest audiences. Publicity and advertising were always significant portions of the budget and activity of the studios. But because through the 1940s the studios controlled production, distribution and exhibition, the function of advertising was to inform the public—in the most seductive manner, naturally—of the special appeal of each movie, rather than as part of a campaign to capture key playdates and

theatres. At a time when each major studio produced around fifty films a year, each of which was guaranteed a playdate, it would have been self-defeating to funnel massive funds into the promotion of a few films, for that would only have resulted in inadequate exposure for the others.

With the gradual break-up of the infrastructure of production in the studios, they have produced ever fewer movies until today a dozen to fifteen releases a year for a studio is not uncommon. That reduction in product also has been caused by a different marketing strategy common in Hollywood for at least the last decade, which is based on the hope that from among a handful of big budget pictures, one or two will prove to be such immense blockbusters that they will put the studio in the black, regardless of how the other pictures do. That, of course, means a high advertising campaign for each picture, since each one of the dozen or so is regarded as having that breakout potential.

ew people outside the movie industry realise the crucial role advertising plays in the kinds of films that eventually reach the American public. Advertising campaigns have become multi-million dollar, multi-media events. In addition to teasers and trailers in the theatres, movies are promoted in local newspapers by the traditional co-op advertising (shared between distributor and exhibitor) and more recently through television and radio spots. Nowadays even the cost of a modest nationwide



TATION

the mechanics of success



the tastes of movie-goers could be measured from year to year like the need for grains or raw materials? The sales manager knows how the films should be promoted, what campaigns will work. Why not simplify the whole advertising campaign by making movies that can be sold easily? The young president of NBC recently summed up their criteria for programming: 'Every movie of the week, moinseries and theatrical film we choose to produce or buy is looked at in relation to how strong the 20-second promo will be.' Only the slickest, most sensational-

istic ideas can pass that acid test.

If you can't tell what the story is in one catch-line the story is obviously not worth telling. Besides, you will need that catch-line in the one-sheet and you might as well have it ready from the start. Agents develop the art of the pitch that is hurled at the potential producer or studio executive in hopes that he will pick up the ball and carry it. The pitch is the start of the ball game, if there is to be a ball game. It is the cornerstone of the deal. There may be no story, no actors, no director, no money, but a good pitch may sell the movie to those who can put the package together and wrap up the deal. The pitch should contain enough of the story and characters for a hard-working executive who loves his work not to have to make an effort to follow it. It cannot be too long, for then it becomes tedious and his attention may wander to the dessert menu or to the other tables where other pitches are being made. It must be exciting, sexy, an incredible story, a movie everyone will want to see. And if you can sum it up at the end with one catch-line, all the better. For *Private Benjamin* it was obviously, 'What does a nice Jewish girl do when her husband croaks on her wedding night? She joins the army.'

he easiest sales job is to sell to the satisfied customer. And in the case of movies, the only people more pleased than the millions who have a chance to see a sequel to their favourite film are the investors who have a chance to invest in it. No one expects the sequel to gross as much as the original, but there is a lot of cushion when the profits are in nine figures. It is common knowledge that the Wars of the Stars will continue in at least three more feature films into the third millennium, but the George Lucas saga is only the most dazzling of the hits that spawn hits. The Godfather's son also became a godfather, Rocky is going for the third match, Jaws is still hungry after two films, Smokey will soon chase the third Bandit, and Superman will fly again for the third

These repeat performances are nothing new in Hollywood. The studios always milked every fad for all it was worth. But never had they used the same titles, similar stories, with the same actors as often as they have in the last ten years. While not all sequels are artistic failures—there is much to commend Godfather II and The Empire Strikes Back in entertainment value as well as originality—most of them are derivative in the pejorative sense. And while the

campaign runs to a quarter of a million dollars and is large enough to be a deterrent to the distribution of a film. There are literally hundreds of foreign and domestic pictures offered to American distributors every year for no money up front which are not picked up because the companies would have to make the investment of an advertising campaign before they could hope to see any profit. Often a film is tested in a particular territory such as Phoenix, Dallas or Atlanta, before it is released nationwide. If box-office receipts barely cover the costs of advertising, the film is usually shelved permanently. Thus, the tastes of Georgians and Texans often determine what movies will play in New York, Boston, Chicago and Los Angeles.

Salesmanship and advertising hang over movies today like the thick smog that chokes the studios, penetrating all aspects of film production. They do not merely influence the box-office grosses or determine what movies will be distributed-they dictate the titles, themes, stories, development of characters and the details of production. Many of the heads of studios and of production today were sales managers yesterday. After all, it is their division which reports the profits and pretty soon they are seen as being responsible for those earnings. It is the logical next step to entrust them with the selection of pictures to be made. Who is closer to the audience than the vicepresident of domestic distribution, the man who is in touch daily with theatre owners all across the country? Who knows more what the public wants, as if

sequel spurs a few producers to creativity, it encourages most to repeat the formulas that worked the first time. Repetition is not only easier: it appears as the surest way to profit from the success of the original. In the case of the superhits, it becomes madness not to make a sequel, since the second boxoffice gusher will be joined by strong cash flows from merchandising and other ancillary rights. Because a sequel to a hit seems to guarantee additional large profits, every effort is made to top the first hit by bigger budgets and a more expensive look for the sequel. This tendency further reduces the number of movies being made to those which copy the hits directly or indirectly.

Most of the films being made today in Hollywood exploit the success of a few original bonanzas. Production charts in Variety look like maths lessons for fouryear-olds, with a supersaturation of Roman numerals following the titles. The income from the film adaptations of Ian Fleming's novels exceeds the GNP of many countries, and it seems that every year of the 70s has an airport named after it. Then there are remakes of past hits, everything from King Kong to The Invasion of the Body Snatchers to The Postman Always Rings Twice. And there is a slew of films in the genres which are regarded to be money-makers. Martial arts movies are crowding the marquees and movie-going for most teenagers has become synonymous with getting a dose of horror.

The decisions on the kinds of films that will be made are painfully predictable. Nothing is dismissed sooner than an idea that threatens to contain germs of originality. Producers circle over ideas like vultures over dying beasts. No one wants to attack a healthy animal or a fresh idea. They are loath to take the first bite, but once a victim has been struck, they flock to an ever-diminishing feast of putrefaction. They both make their livelihood by ripping off their victims.

he game that producers play consists of trying to repeat the story of the prototype with as little deviation from it as possible. They may call it a new twist, but it is only a slight bend in the story line which never strays far from the original. A record of three years of production at New World Pictures bears this out. I arrived there during the pre-production of a movie called Deathsport that followed on the heels of Deathrace. The first used cars to kill people in a high-school-play version of the future; the second, motorcycles. The first was a moderate success, the second a dismal failure. Avalanche tried to cash in on the success of disaster films like Earthquake, The Poseidon Adventure and Towering Inferno. It turned out to be such a total disaster that its planned sequel Volcano never got beyond a lunch discussion.

Piranha did moderate business in the wake of Jaws, which prompted the filming of yet another fish story, to be called Up from the Depths. The twist on Jaws



The star of 'Up from the Depths' on location in the Philippines.

was intended to be a prehistoric shark that emerged to terrorise an island resort. When it was pointed out to the producer that all sharks are prehistoric creatures, we were commanded to find another hook with which to land a hit. The solution was a double fin which was made even sillier by a mechanical model looking like a smiling frog designed by the director, who had rebelled against the inane idea and bravely attempted to make a spoof of the genre to be called Something Fishy. The movie never lived up to its title and it sank back into murky oblivion. But the producer was so enamoured of the genre that he went on to make yet another drippy thriller in Humanoids from the Deep.

The rip-offs continued. Following the success of Saturday Night Fever an ardent young director who desperately wanted to make a rock and roll movie persuaded the producer to cash in on the disco craze. We signed the punk rock group The Ramones and began production with the working title Disco High. Only after long discussions and irrefutable proof that the music in the film was pure rock and roll and that rock and roll was enjoying a revival which would translate into big bucks at the box-office did the producer relent and acquiesce to releasing the movie as Rock and Roll High School. To cash in on the success of science fiction, the producer launched the Magnificent Seven into space and called their adventures Battle Beyond the Stars. During all that time the company originated only one movie which was not a tampered version of another, a largely fictional story of John Dillinger's affair with Polly Hamilton in a period gangster picture called The Lady in Red. Although it was a formula picture like the others, it did not follow the mould of recent hits. Maybe it should have, because it was a dismal box-office failure.

While one would expect the record of New World to be straight exploitation, since its owner Roger Corman has specialised in the genre for most of his twentyseven years of movie-making, these films also dominate the production lists of the majors and are not qualitatively different from New World product. Indeed, one New York critic, commenting on the phenomenal success of Jaws in the summer of 1975, remarked that this newest of box-office hits was nothing more than a Roger Corman movie done on a large scale. The tendency to make these big budget exploitation films can be dated from the early 70s, when a number of movies which worked as a series of thrills rather than stories achieved unprecedented success at the box-office. Airport grossed 45 million in 1970, The Poseidon Adventure 42 million in 1972, The Exorcist 82 million in 1973, Towering Inferno 50 million in 1975, and Jaws that same year smashed all box-office records by grossing over 100 million dollars. Each of these movies were placed among the ten highest grossing films of all time within weeks after they were released. The industry could not ignore such a clear sign from the public. And so the exploitation film clinched its stranglehold on Hollywood. It will come as a surprise only to outsiders that MGM, once the studio with the classiest movies, offered its presidency to Roger Corman in 1977. (He turned it down when he found out the salary-he could make more money running his own factory.)

xploitation films aim to elicit a visceral response, rather than emotional or intellectual involvement. emphasise thrills rather than stories, spectacle rather than narrative. Going to see one is much like going to an amusement park. The most popular rides at a park offer speed or fear; in exploitation films, their equivalents, chases and horror, dominate. Each sequence works like a ride, unleashing the flow of adrenalin and increasing the heartbeat, pulse and sweat. As soon as one such sequence is over, another begins, with only the flimsiest excuse for the transition. Because exploitation films work in such a mechanistic way, they rely on formulas which have been developed over the years. Over forty years ago the art critic Clement Greenberg defined the elements of kitsch. 'Kitsch is mechanical and

operates by formulas. Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations. Kitsch changes according to style, but remains always the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times. Kitsch pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money—not even their time.' Exploitation film is the kitsch of today.

Few people have spent as much time perfecting the formulas to manipulate audiences as Roger Corman. His cheap movies have become cult objects of a jaded age in which thrills are prized over meaning, content and quality. His formulas have influenced the big budget exploitation films either through the thousands of production people who have started with him or through the movies themselves, which have become models of bad taste.

Corman's control of his films is close to complete. In his scripts he insists on rock hard characters for his leads. A major action piece must occur within the first 15-20 minutes of the movie, and others must follow with not too much time lost between them for exposition of the story. He has often insisted on a rewrite simply to include one more bank robbery, one more car chase, one more murder. During filming he hammers in the old adage of production managers to 'shoot the money', meaning spending the most time and footage on what has cost most in the production. He screens his films every week or two during the editing to see what works. Often he is dissatisfied and he insists on shooting extra scenes of violence or nudity to insert into an already overloaded movie. Because of his fear of boring his audience, he eliminates whole sequences of exposition, resulting in the usually jumbled, unintelligible story. He boils his films down to ninety minutes, sometimes as short as eighty, for fear of losing the audience. During the mix he insists on recording the opening minute at a lower volume than the rest of the soundtrack so that in the theatre the projectionist will set the sound level according to the opening, resulting in an assault on the eardrums as well as the eyes and mind of the viewer. As a final precaution he stages a sneak preview just before releasing the film, which he personally attends. He watches the audience reaction, then goes to the editing room with the editor and director and dictates a few final trims.

Not all big budget exploitation film producers succeed in so completely dominating their films, but their insistence on thrills to the detriment of story, characters and the film itself results in a similar product. Perhaps the greatest damage of the widespread acceptance of exploitation films by Hollywood is that the process is irreversible. Having realised what huge profits can be made from exploitation films, producers and studios will continue to grind them out, inundating the market, at best searching for new shock gimmicks that will work. Surrounded by multi-million dollar movie trash, we cannot help but remember the heyday of the studios with fond nostalgia.



'One from the Heart': Teri Garr heads for a Zoetrope Las Vegas.

THE ZOETROPE SAGA

Lynda Myles on the travails of Coppola

'Francis likes to go jump off cliffs and I hug the ground'—George Lucas.

'We're always out there on the thin edge'—Fred Roos, producer, Zoetrope.

'Francis likes living on the brink'—Barry Diller, Chairman, Paramount Pictures.

In 1969, Francis Coppola had a vision of establishing an independent studio, free from the domination of Hollywood, where he could find and nurture talent. In partnership with George Lucas, he founded American Zoetrope in San Francisco, as the studio to fulfil this dream. Their hopes were soon dashed when Warners' dislike of Lucas' *THX 1138* led to the withdrawal of their financial backing for the studio, leaving Coppola with a half-million-dollar debt. This disaster

was soon expunged by the spectacular success of *The Godfather*, followed by *The Godfather Part 11*. However, although Coppola's personal fortunes revived, the dream of developing the Northern Californian base was never fully realised. At best, American Zoetrope in San Francisco offered excellent post-production facilities. It was never to attain the proportions of the expansion of George Lucas' own company, which includes the 3000-acre production base,

the Skywalker Ranch, and Industrial Light and Magic, the special effects studio in Marin.

Coppola's next epic display of brinkmanship came with Apocalypse Now in 1979. After 16 months' shooting on location in the Philippines amidst hurricanes and typhoons, the budget was inflated from the original \$12 million to \$31 million. Sceptics thought it improbable that Apocalypse Now could return the \$70 million in rentals required to break even. Yet already Coppola is within \$5 million of his colossal repayments to United Artists, after which the film (and the network television sales, worth an estimated \$10 million) reverts to him.

After the vicissitudes of Apocalypse Now, Coppola's original dream seemed closer to realisation with the purchase in March 1980 of the Hollywood General Studios in Los Angeles. After months of negotiation, Coppola had acquired a 10acre facility, with nine sound stages, 34 editing rooms and a special effects shop. Built in 1919 as the Jasper Hollywood Studio, the lot had housed a range of illustrious names, from King Vidor and Mary Pickford to Mae West and Gary Cooper. Coppola's successful acquisition of the studio for \$6.7 million was called 'the steal of the century'. (At that time, the nearby Goldwyn Studios were on the market for \$18 million.) Two years later, with the costs of location shooting escalating, the demand for studio space has increased, probably doubling the value of Coppola's initial investment.

He wanted the renamed Zoetrope Studios to be a place 'run by the creative talents, free of businessmen and bureaucrats.' He would re-create the Hollywood resident studio system of the 30s, with contract players and permanent technicians, producing films with a distinctive studio signature. He saw himself in a clear line of descent from the great moguls whose personalities dominated their studios. 'There is no one like Zanuck around any more,' Coppola commented in a recent interview. 'And there are no studios like there used to be. I can envision Zoetrope being that way . . . with a great restaurant where we can all sit round ... with a lot of cute girls ... the way it was, what I missed out on.

But Zoetrope Studios was not simply a romantic re-creation of Hollywood in its heyday: instead, it would attempt to revolutionise the whole process of filmmaking, by introducing highly sophisticated digital and electronic equipment. Always fascinated by technology, Coppola acquired \$800,000 worth of this new equipment. The ultimate aim would be to produce movies not on celluloid but on high definition video which would surpass film in terms of its visual quality. Coppola's first feature to be made with the new technology, One from the Heart, used a process called 'pre-visualisation', which means that the action, music and dialogue are recorded on video before shooting begins. Effectively, the director can make and see the completed work before shooting a foot of celluloid. Through this union of the traditional Hollywood craftsmanship and the new





The new technology: the Zoetrope caravan and its interior.

technology, movies could be made more cheaply and efficiently than before.

By March 1980, the development of the studio had begun. Michael Powell (who had shot The Thief of Baghdad for Alexander Korda on the same lot in 1940) was installed as artist-in-residence, while actors Frederic Forrest, Raul Julia, Teri Garr and Nastassia Kinski formed the nucleus of the repertory company. A deal with Orion guaranteed distribution of a programme of films made under Coppola's personal supervision. Wim Wenders' Hammett and Caleb Deschanel's The Escape Artist went into production as part of this agreement.

The first signs of trouble appeared in the late spring, 1980, when Coppola suspended the shooting of *Hammett*, eight weeks into production and some ten days short of completion. Rumours indicated that script problems had plagued the production. The failure to complete *Hammett* at this stage would be one source of later problems, as it both deprived the company of needed revenue and involved extended interest payments on \$4 million of the \$9 million budget. The deteriorating financial health of the company was publicly exposed in February 1981 when the Zoetrope President, Robert Spiotta, faced the studio staff to inform them that the \$600,000 payroll could not be met. In an emotional climax worthy of Hollywood itself, the united staff agreed to work for deferred wages and reaffirmed their belief in Coppola.

The financial situation was desperate. Instead of beginning work on *One from the Heart*, his 'fantasy about romantic love, jealousy and sex', Coppola was confronting a major cash crisis. Originally, *One from the Heart* was to be shot on location in Las Vegas, on a budget of \$15



Francis Coppola directs Nastassia Kinski and Frederic Forrest in 'One from the Heart'.

million. The Chase Manhattan Bank (which was to supply about half the financing for Zoetrope Studios up to an aggregate of \$20 million) had agreed to lend \$8 million, while the additional \$7 million was raised by pre-selling the film to foreign distributors. But since the real Las Vegas did not correspond to the heightened reality Coppola sought for this film, he decided to recreate Las Vegas on the sound stages of Zoetrope, on sumptuous sets designed by Dean Tavoularis. The estimated \$2 million saved on the film through the previsualisation process was absorbed in the \$4.5 million costs of the sets.

German tax-shelter investors were found to bridge the gap between the planned \$15 million and the revised \$23 million budget. A few weeks later, these investors withdrew, alarmed, according to Coppola, by problems surrounding Superman II. He was left to face another epic financial crisis. Production on One from the Heart resumed only after Coppola had agreed to pledge \$8 million of his own property against a loan from the Security Pacific Bank, at the rate of \$1 million per week. Weekly signing parties would be held between the bank and Coppola at which he would sign over more of his real-estate holdings as collateral for the loan. In addition, help appeared from unexpected quarters: a Canadian real-estate tycoon called Jack Singer provided \$3 million (with the studio as collateral), with the possibility of another \$5 million. Barry Diller, the Chairman of Paramount Pictures, contributed a half-million-dollar 'goodwill' loan. For an additional half million

dollars, Zoetrope sold a thriller, Interface, to Paramount.

Although he had survived the immediate crisis, Coppola's problems were soon to resurface. Now, not only his personal reputation but also the future of Zoetrope Studios rested on the success of One from the Heart. The relationship with Paramount, the film's distributor, began to deteriorate in August 1981 when, without Coppola's knowledge or consent, they arranged an exhibitors' screening of the film in San Francisco. The print shown was an incomplete rough-cut, with only a few of the musical's twenty songs. Rumours of a negative reaction by that audience were leaked to the press, creating considerable friction among Paramount, the Chase Manhattan Bank and an irate Coppola.

His growing dissatisfaction with Paramount's attitude towards the film led him to a bravura gesture to 'let the people decide'. Without notifying or consulting Paramount, who were then still committed to a national 700-theatre release on 10 February, Coppola took a full-page advertisement in the New York Times, announcing two screenings of the film at the Radio City Music Hall, on 15 January. This manoeuvre involved considerable risk: if the reaction was positive, it would increase Coppola's influence with the creditors and with the distributors; if negative, it could seriously jeopardise the film's release.

In fact, the New York screenings returned an open verdict. The reaction seemed measured, rather than ecstatic. Reporters commented on 'polite, lukewarm applause', a somewhat ominous sign given the 'event' nature of the screening and Coppola's presence. Two screenings the following week in Mann's Village Theatre in Los Angeles generated a much more enthusiastic response. By this point, the film no longer had a distributor, with both Coppola and Paramount claiming to have been the first to terminate their agreement.

The break-even point for One from the Heart (the costs of which are now estimated at over \$26 million) would be at least \$40 million. At this point in February 1982, when no final print of the film exists, it is impossible to estimate its box office potential. To attempt a prognosis for Zoetrope is hazardous. Coppola himself retains a huge earning capacity as a director, based largely on the Godfather success. His directorial fee for One from the Heart, for example, was \$3 million (which he has ploughed back into the studio).

Much of the melodrama surrounding his own film seems to have been avoided by the other Zoetrope films. Production on Hammett was resumed under Wim Wenders in November 1981. It is currently in post-production in New York, before its anticipated appearance at Cannes in May. The Escape Artist is scheduled for US release this spring, and Robert Dalva's The Return of the Black Stallion in late 1982. Coppola himself is planning to start location-shooting in March this year in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for The Outsiders, a story of teenagers and a small-time 'godfather'. A consummate gambler, Coppola is again playing high stakes. Can he produce a third winning



SEAN FRENCH

THE NAPOLEON PHENOMENON

Karl Marx was thinking of Napoleon Bonaparte and his nephew Louis, when he said that historical events occur twice: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. But the statement is also appropriate to the story of Abel Gance's Napoleon. There was an hubristic folly as well as genius in Gance's original conception in which, seen in retrospect, he seems to stand Canute-like against the imminent flood of talking pictures: as Al Jolson assured moviegoers that they hadn't heard nothin' yet, Gance took the image (heightened by music) farther than it had ever been taken before. The climactic triptych (Polyvision) is a final abandonment of historical actuality in favour of the mythic, pyrotechnic imagination of the film director: at this moment Gance seems inseparable from Napoleon. Gance was setting himself up to be knocked down, of course, and knocked down he was. This débâcle, in which the film was dismantled and in a sense Gance's own genius along with it (he was to try several times to rework Napoleon, perhaps as an obscure act of atonement), is notorious. The story of

the film's reconstruction by Kevin Brownlow and the National Film Archive is now legendary; which means, unfortunately, that most people's idea of how it happened is inaccurate.

On 30 November 1980, as part of the London Film Festival, the reconstructed version was shown, and here the story should end in triumph: at five hours, it was not as long as the six-hour definitive version, but it was the longest version seen since 1927 (even the première was only 31/4 hours); it was accompanied by a magnificent score composed, adapted and conducted by Carl Davis; and it was greeted ecstatically both by the audience and by the critics. Yet it is now that history repeats itself as farce and reveals that success brings with it its own contradictions and complications. The film has been a surprise hit in the United States and, because of this, it seems likely that it will be given a worldwide release. However, the paradox is that the film which was meant to demonstrate the effect that a silent picture could have when seen whole, correctly projected and with a full orchestra, will be shown in a

shortened form, with an inferior score (in the opinion of virtually everyone I spoke to) and sometimes without the live orchestra or the full triptych effect. How much can you take out of a reconstructed film before it stops qualifying as a reconstruction?

Once *Napoleon* had become a success, two problems emerged. The first was establishing the ownership of the film. The second concerned the logistics of packaging and marketing. Even these are not easily separable.

In 1968, the French Minister of Culture, André Malraux, gave Gance a grant to work on yet another version of Napoleon to commemorate Bonaparte's Bicentennial. When Gance exhausted these funds, Claude Lelouch agreed to put up a sum of money in partnership with the Centre National. (The Cinémathèque Française, none too willingly, handed over its negatives and fine grains to Gance, and Kevin Brownlow had access to them at his laboratory.) Lelouch bought from Gance the rights to all



'Napoleon' at the Empire, Leicester Square. Photograph by Laurie Lewis.

preceding versions of the film. Bonaparte et la Révolution appeared in September 1971, and four years later it was acquired for distribution in the USA by Images Film Archives. The President of IFA, Bob Harris, also investigated the complex question of copyright: the original 1927 version, which was called Napoléon vu par Abel Gance, had been acquired for US distribution by MGM (and cut to 80 minutes); but now the American copyright had lapsed—in the US, it was in the 'public domain'.

Meanwhile in 1973 Tom Luddy, who was at that time director of the Pacific Film Archive in San Francisco, had a screening of Napoleon (still only partially reconstructed but with the triptych, as shown also by the AFI in Washington), and this was seen by Francis Coppola. He was bowled over by it, and even at this early stage he got the idea of showing it commercially with a full orchestra, though nothing was to come of this for some years.

It is important to realise that a reconstructed version of Napoleon was not then a commercially attractive proposition. Kevin Brownlow has spoken of the garbled 35mm copy of the film from the Cinémathèque Française he saw in 1963. To this day, the Cinémathèque have stuck by a print that lasts four hours only because it is projected at 16 frames a second (instead of 20). In 1981, the reconstructed Napoleon played at the Colosseum in Rome before an audience of 10,000 including the Mayor of Rome and Mme Mitterrand; yet when Bonaparte et la Révolution was shown the previous year at the Officina Film Club

in Rome, the audience apparently didn't even reach double figures.

In 1975, when Kevin Brownlow ran out of money for his work of reconstruction, David Francis, Curator of the National Film Archive, decided that the Archive should step in. This was where the final restoration took place. Thus from 1975 on the British Film Institute had the film at their disposal. If they had had the confidence and the money to stage it then, with full orchestra and the Davis score, the primacy of their version would now almost certainly be unquestioned. Of course we have the benefit of hindsight, but they seem not to have been specially eager to show the film. It was not until several years later that Tom Luddy (who had shown the film in San Francisco) and Bob Harris arranged for the reconstructed Napoleon to receive its first public showing, in September 1979 at the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado. Luddy was by now Director of Special Projects at Zoetrope, Coppola's own company, and the film was to be marketed in the US by Zoetrope with Images Film Archives. They had received their print from the National Film Archive, via the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

By the time that the British Film Institute and Thames Television decided to screen Napoleon at the 1980 LFF, complete with Carl Davis' score (he had earlier composed the music for Thames' Hollywood series, written, directed and produced by Brownlow and David Gill), Coppola was already planning his own version. He commissioned a score from his father, the composer Carmine

Coppola, who had scored parts of Godfather Part II and Apocalypse Now.

The reconstructed Napoleon received its public première in London at the Empire, Leicester Square on 30 November 1980, and it first appeared in New York at the Radio City Music Hall on 23 January 1981. The two versions were substantially different, because of a decision taken early in 1980, when no one else wanted to show the film and Bob Harris, looking for a version that the theatres might consider, decided that it needed to be of a more commercial length. The subplot which shows the idolisation of Napoleon by Violine Fleuri (played by Annabella) was entirely removed and the Battle of Toulon The cuts was trimmed. sequence amounted to about twenty minutes. In addition, with the idea of keeping as much of the footage as possible but still achieving a more manageable running time, the US version was projected at the modern speed of 24 frames per second instead of the correct 20 frames seen in London. Thus the New York version lasted four hours instead of five.

There were also differences in attitude, out of which the English don't come quite so well. After the triumph of the first showing, there was a view within the BFI: 'That was the experience of a lifetime—let's leave it at that.' Anthony Smith, Director of the BFI, commented that 'the world will now be divided into two groups—those who have seen Napoleon and those who haven't', awarding it the cosy exclusivity of a gentleman's club. The attitude at Zoetrope was altogether more hard-headed. When Coppola

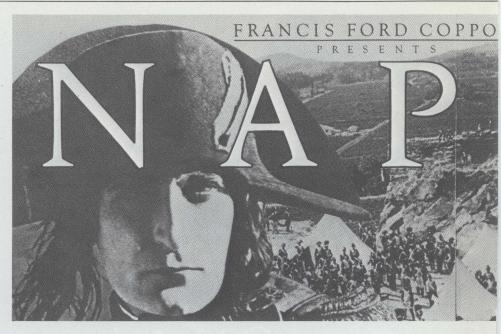
talks of Gance it is not as a tragedy but a success story: after all, the film got made. Coppola himself has embarked on colossally ambitious, seemingly crazy projects, but he has no intention of martyring himself to his art—he has made money out of them, just. While he fully appreciates the aesthetic and historical importance of the film, he wants to show it for reasons other than a pietistic genuflection to the silent era (which is what many of the reviews in Britain amounted to). For Kevin Brownlow, its success shows people 'rediscovering cinema, the real cinematic experience.' But Coppola speaks of the film's present value as changing people's views of the way films can be made and shown. His acquisition of Napoleon is right in line with his innovative use of videotaping for his new film, One from the Heart.

As to its presentation, Coppola presided over the occasion like Brando at the wedding in *The Godfather*, and his name sprawled across the posters, leaving Gance's name looking insignificant somewhere at the bottom. Claude Lelouch flew in for the second Radio City Music Hall screening, and was called up on stage by Coppola at the LA screening rather as if he had directed the film.

Talking to Kevin Brownlow and David Gill about Napoleon in America, one can detect an ambiguity of response. They are probably fairly unhappy about the cuts (although Brownlow was able to supervise them) and David Gill is disappointed with Carmine Coppola's score. What they do admire is Coppola's chutzpah in sinking \$270,000 into the première and then actually taking it out on the road. On 19-22 March 1981 the film began a nationwide tour at the Ohio Theatre in Columbus and it met with astonishing success. Four performances in New Orleans grossed \$153,000. And Brownlow feels very grateful: 'There's no doubt that Coppola and Luddy initiated a miraculous campaign.'

Understandably, the people who feel bitter are the National Film Archive, who seem to have been written out of the history books by the American distributors-no mention of them was made at the New York screenings. The success could have been a public justification for their whole activity, but the credit where given has gone to Brownlow alone. Clyde Jeavons, deputy curator of the Archive, considers this 'truncated version' as 'in some ways a travesty. It moves back history fifty years.' Yet the success has still provided the Archive with some good publicity. 'People now recognise usabroad as well. Lots of venues abroad want to show our version of the film, with the Carl Davis score, instead of the American version.'

The problem now is that Harris and Coppola have obtained the worldwide rights to Napoleon from Claude Lelouch (who has earned a reported \$400,000 plus 50 per cent of what Napoleon grosses anywhere in the world for an investment estimated at only a few thousand dollars). A soundtrack version of Napoleon (without the authentic triptych, naturally) using Carmine Coppola's score has



been prepared for normal theatrical release and it is rumoured that Universal will distribute the film. The question now is whether the British version can legally appear anywhere but in Britain (the BFI have only the UK rights), and no one is quite sure what would happen if, say, Universal wanted to distribute the soundtrack version in this country. At the 1981 Telluride Festival, Brownlow and Gill met Luddy and Harris to arrange future discussions, which should have taken place by the time this article appears. David Gill was clear about what they wanted: 'We don't want to prevent Zoetrope showing their version. We just want to make sure that it doesn't cause the suppression of the longest version with the finest score.'

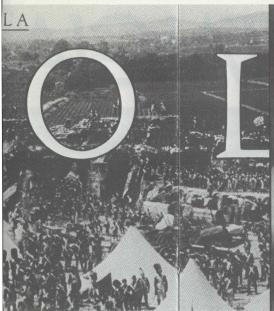
Clyde Jeavons told me that negotiations with Coppola were now fairly entrenched. 'He does support the Archive-in principle and actively. But there's a certain ambivalence. He has acknowledged the UK rights; returns within the UK come to the BFI. He has allowed us to supply fine grain copies to other archives, but they are entirely embargoed until he decides that the distribution process has run its course.' Coppola has also made the generous gesture of giving the so far unscheduled UK première of One from the Heart to the NFA; and indeed the fate of this film could strongly affect that of Napoleon, because Zoetrope is said to be hanging on its success. If it flops, Coppola will scarcely be able, according to some reports, to afford the screening of a home movie in his own front room.

Napoleon has now been shown at a variety of venues in Britain, in several forms. As well as the extra performances at the Empire, Leicester Square, in March 1981, Carl Davis also conducted at a screening in Edinburgh for the 1981 festival. He had improved and augmented the score for the triptych sequence, but unhappily it was shown in the CinemaScope version (rather than the Polyvision using three projectors), so the picture shrank drastically and the conclusion was apparently anticlimactic.

It has also been on tour with a piano accompaniment to such places as Norwich, Leicester and Cardiff. At Stoke the music was performed by the ad hoc ensemble, the Napoleon Sinfonietta. Even as I write, I have received a press release from Phoenix Arts in Leicester whose complete performance will include 'world renowned pianist Andrew Youdell's...largely improvised piano accompaniment', an occasion that, I fear, will demand stamina from audience and performer alike.

Why Napoleon? What is it about the film that has attracted this level of interest, made Kevin Brownlow sacrifice half his life and caused Andrew Youdell to put himself through an experience that will probably leave him unable to play anything more complicated than a harmonica for the rest of his days? And what does it mean for future showings of silent films? I asked David Robinson, film critic of The Times, what he thought were the reasons for the Napoleon phenomenon: 'Success breeds successthe first showing sold out, and if one sells out once then this generates interest. Then there was the intrinsic quality—it does have an epic dimension. There is the shock in seeing a silent film as it should be seen. One thinks of them as jerking, dominated by the clicking of the projector, with piano music. D. W. Griffith talked of the "silent pantomime" and I'd thought of this as a fancy and affected phrase, but when I saw the film I realised that it had something quite different. And the score was brilliant.'

But it is hard to draw general conclusions, for Napoleon is authentically unique and, because of Gance's fixation on the intoxicating power of the cinematic visionary, viewers appropriate it for their own personal conception of film. I have already related this to Coppola and Brownlow. For Pauline Kael of the New Yorker it lends itself to her conception of the exhilarating shallowness of movie images (particularly, one assumes, at the 20 per cent faster than ideal speed at which she saw it projected): 'I think

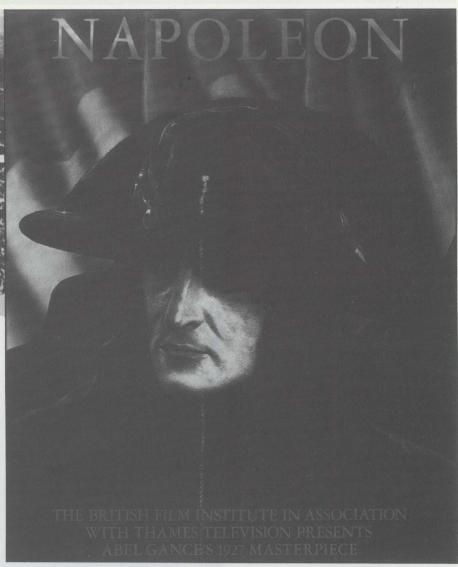


Gance always meant to be a prophet showing mankind the Way, but he's a prophet only in terms of movie techniques. As a thinker he's enslaved to his own schoolboy gush.' It is a souped-up version of her *Raising Kane* argument and she links those 'masters of bravura, such as Gance and Welles, who often seem wildly "cinematic" because they are essentially theatrical.'

Richard Grenier, in the American monthly magazine Commentary (the representative of the new Jewish conservatism), assimilates the film to his running battle with the left over the post-Vietnam anti-American films. Americans cheer this 'rabidly patriotic movie' because their 'channels of true patriotism are blocked.' He concludes with a challenge: 'Could the members of the audience at the Music Hall use the word "American" without embarrassment, and with anything like the exorbitant passion given the word "French" in this film?" Guy Dumur of Le Nouvel Observateur has a simpler reason for the attraction: 'On peut penser que c'est l'image même de Napoléon qui attire les foules.

Another reason is that the reconstruction makes such a good story. Never mind that Richard Grenier or Anita Brookner (in the only film review the London Review of Books has ever printed) get it hopelessly wrong-it remains a fine yarn even in its apocryphal forms. Kevin Brownlow speaks amusingly of the conception some people have that he built up the film virtually from a single frame of a film that had otherwise entirely vanished. There was also a sense (fostered to some extent by the BFI) that it could only be shown this once, as if it were to be reduced once again to its fragmented state after the LFF.

There were a lot of special factors concerned with Napoleon and it could be suggested that it was the film for people who don't go to the movies, just as the RSC's Nicholas Nickleby was the play for people who don't go to the theatre (they certainly didn't go to see Heaven's Gate, which will perhaps require a future Kevin Brownlow to restore to integrity). In fact



Public relations. Left: detail of magazine advertisement for the Radio City Music Hall screening. Above: the poster, British style.

it benefited from a new rule of the London theatre, that if you put on a show (like Henry VI Parts 1-3 or The Greeks) that is long and oppressive enough in prospect, the middle classes will pour out in droves to see it. It is perhaps the closest we can now come to the Blitz spirit, and Anita Brookner claimed hyperbolically that her heroic day 'sustained only by an in-house sandwich' enabled her the better to comprehend the suffering of the Paris mob.

In the long run, the showing of King Vidor's The Crowd at the 1981 London Film Festival may prove more significant. It was a bold choice as a follow-up, because it seems to lack all the fireworks of Napoleon. David Robinson said: 'It's not a long film and it's a little film. And although it's been seen before, it was still a rediscovery, having it with Carl Davis' score.' Brownlow and Gill faced people who, after having said that Napoleon would never find an audience, were now demanding why they couldn't find something as commercial as Napoleon. Labouring under these drawbacks, and having the benefit only of being an excellent film with a Carl Davis score that was, if anything, better than that for Napoleon, The Crowd did sell out, though there were more than a few jitters beforehand, and disappointingly few national critics thought it worth the trouble of attending. But it showed that an unhyped film can succeed.

The question of how many more silent films we shall see is a difficult one. David Gill spoke warmly of the restoration of The Crowd: 'I realised as I was working with Carl and with the technicians in the recording studio that we were lavishing a care and attention on it that it hadn't received for fifty years—since Vidor made it.' The commitment is obviously there in abundance: it's the economic problems that may prove the barrier, though there is no necessity why this should be so. As David Gill says: 'With a proper subsidy, such as opera gets, these films could be shown regularly, all over the country.'

For the moment, we can expect Napoleon on Channel Four (though without the triptych, so there's no need to nip out and hire two extra sets), followed by The Crowd. There are more revivals planned of a similar nature, and even without proper subsidies, the future looks fairly auspicious. I don't believe that any future silent film will be as successful as Napoleon and, considering all the circumstances, that may not be such a bad thing.

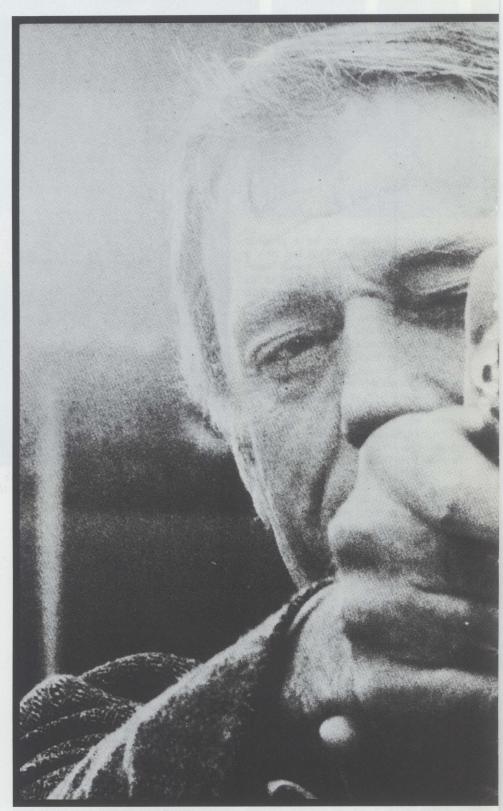
FROM NOSTALGIA

DAVID NICHOLLS
writes about some
French crime films
of the 1970s

The 'historical' 1970s in France will probably be seen as starting after the 'events' of 1968 and ending with the Socialist triumphs in the elections of 1981. The quality of the cinema in the France of Pompidou and Giscard has generally been viewed as rather disappointing and mediocre, with only individuals like Rohmer, Rivette and Bresson working outside commercial circuits producing interesting works, this despite opportunities for young film-makers which must have made their British confrères green with envy. A general sense of social impotence and political torpor, la société bloquée, seemed to manifest itself in the intellectual dominance of structuralism, Althusserian Marxism, and the nihilistic stupor of Derrida and the later Foucault. The wilderness films of Godard and his collaborators, other works by less talented disciples, and the theoretical writings in Cahiers du Cinéma and Cinéthique promulgated what Raymond Williams has called 'a fetishized concentration on the point of view at the expense of what was viewed.'

The result was a confusion between formalist radicalism and socialist radicalism, underpinned by dubious sociological axioms: the working class was seen as 'incorporated' or 'embourgeoisified', without considering the complexities of these notions, and the cinema audience as mindless consumers of Hollywood ideology, being allowed no freedom or self-awareness. This rabid idealism served as an excuse for not trying to reach an audience, and beneath the loudly declared commitment to a total revolutionism lay an intellectual élitism which was contemptuously dismissive of commercially successful political films such as those made by Costa-Gavras or Pontecorvo.

The underlying idea or fear, almost generally felt and picked up as a journalistic cliché, was that the Left could never come to power in France by 'normal', electoral means, and baroque theoretical constructions were erected to account for it, while a simpler, purely materialist outlook, concentrating on the power of the state and its direct appendages (not 'ideological apparatuses') would have



Yves Montand in 'Police Python 357'.

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explained far more. It was the despised commercial political films and, as we shall see, crime films that addressed these issues in a manner accessible to a broad audience. The events of 1981, though doubtless dismissed as irrelevant by 'true' revolutionaries, proved that the concerns of the commercial directors were more in tune with reality. The success of the Socialists in 1981 may or may not be the beginning of a new era, but it was definitely the end of the old one.

There were many possible reactions to the general climate of feeling. Genre cinema, most creatively the crime film, still proved to be the most revealing in presenting the feelings, styles and fears of the urban and suburban world, while providing new (or newish) directors with the opportunity to produce a vital, critical cinema. If the results were unduly pessimistic, this not only provides us with insights into the pessimism but also shows how social and political criticism could burst through the anodyne jolliness of much French commercial product. Alain Corneau, one of the more exciting new directors to emerge during the long decade, made the case for creative change within traditional forms in an interview with Positif (June 1979): 'If we continue to think in terms of new subjects we will get nowhere. For we must not forget that society has not changed: the forces of production are still in the same hands. So why should the subjects of films change? What has changed is the manner of making the themes come alive.' Further, the French state and its appendages, known collectively as le pouvoir, were not fooled. Several films, including Chabrol's Les Noces Rouges (1972), Yves Boisset's Un Condé (1970) and Michel Drach's Le Pull-over Rouge (1980), ran into censorship problems, proving, if proof were needed, the justice of Corneau's perception.

The French crime film has always been conditioned by two major influences: the American thriller film and indigenous crime novels. The influence of the American paranoid or post-Watergate cycle will become evident below; Corneau has cited Mean Streets and Dog Day Afternoon as recent influences on his own work. But there is also a native influence from literature. The wave of post-1968 crime writers, led by Jean-Patrick Manchette. Michel Grisolia, and more recently Delacorta, have been influential both by direct participation in film-making and by creating a way of looking at crime which has formed a symbiotic relationship with film-makers' ways of seeing. They have thus played the same role in the 1970s as that played by Auguste Le

Breton, Albert Simonin and José Giovanni in the 50s.

Manchette has been particularly important. His novels have been adapted by Chabrol (Nada, 1972), Boisset (Folle à Tuer, 1975) and Jacques Deray (Trois Hommes à Abattre, 1980). Having already written screenplays before 1968, in the 70s he adapted American novels for Gérard Pirès (L'Agression, 1974, and L'Ordinateur des Pompes Funèbres, 1975). The Pirès films were flat, and Manchette described Chabrol's Nada as 'Stalinist', but it may be said of Manchette that he pointed the way for Boisset and thence for younger directors, including Jean Pourtalé and Claude Barrois. Grisolia, a journalist on the pro-Socialist Nouvel Observateur, has recently worked with Corneau on Le Choix des Armes (1981). Delacorta's first novel, Diva, turned into a stylish and haunting movie in 1981 by Jean-Jacques Benneix, is perhaps a sign of things to come, taking the political contestation of Boisset and Corneau for granted and using it as a background for an obsessional, almost hallucinatory, exploration of youth, organised crime and the commercialisation of art in capitalist society.

The films I am talking about here are, of course, only a part of the total French crime film output, though they are the most interesting and include some of the most commercially successful. But it is important to remember the gloomier side of the story. Jean-Paul Belmondo, still the major indigenous male box-office star, largely wasted his talent as far as crime films are concerned, being content to churn out his one film a year in the genre, regardless of quality. Among Belmondo vehicles, Philippe Labro's overambitious L'Alpageur (1975), in which our hero plays a professional assassin, was probably the most arresting, while Henri Verneuil's Peur sur la Ville (also 1975) is interesting in being one of the very few, if not the only, thoroughly propolice French film's of the era. For the most part, however, Belmondo has been content to appear in weak comedy thrillers that only serve the viewer nostalgic for L'Homme de Rio. In a similar vein are the two Grand Blond films of Yves Robert and Annie Girardot's impersonations of the commissaire Tanquerelle in Philippe de Broca's Tendre Poulet (1977) and On a volé la Cuisse de Jupiter (1979). Other films of the same kind could be mentioned, as well as a few oddities, some of which will be cited below. But there is more pleasure and profit to be had from viewing those often equally popular and more entertaining movies which also provided what Corneau has described as an 'urban radiography of the 70s'.

HE MUTATIONS

The decade opened with the mode rétro in full swing, spearheaded by the huge commercial success of Deray's Borsalino (1969). The conventional interpretation of rétro is that it represented or reflected the conciliation of the Gaullist Right with the Vichyist Right, as shown in the technocratic post-de Gaulle Pompidolian and Giscardian regimes, by rehabilitating the forces of collaboration. This mechanistic and reductionist view seems to be based entirely on tendentious readings of at most three films: Lacombe Lucien, Le Chagrin et la Pitié and Français, si vous saviez. It certainly crumbles quickly under an inspection of the crime films which flitted through the cycle. Only Claude Lelouch's Le Bon et les Méchants (1975), an abject comedy thriller based around the notorious Gestapo headquarters in the Rue Lauriston, could be called to witness in its support. Otherwise the retro fashion, which ranged over a much wider historical period than just Vichy, provided opportunities for light entertainment, political contestation, stylistic exercises and personal statements.

Borsalino itself represents light entertainment, with the period setting appealing to nostalgic fashion and providing the background for Delon and Belmondo to go through their light-hearted paces in an idealised Marseilles of the 1930s. It is closer in tone to The Sting than to Bonnie and Clyde, and attempts to describe it, as Cahiers du Cinéma did, as 'fascisant' are remarkably silly.

But even before Borsalino hit the screens, audiences had the chance (and many took it) to see a totally different kind of rétro crime film, this time based on fact, in La Bande à Bonnot. Made before May '68, but not released until after the 'events', Philippe Fourastié's film portrayed Bonnot and his gang as anarchist militants first, criminals second. 'Anarchism was his vocation,' said Fourastié of his hero, 'banditry a distraction.' Although Fourastié went on to say that he had not gone far enough ('c'est un film qui n'est pas méchant, du moins pas assez...') the representation of the gang, warts and all, is far removed from Delon and Belmondo, Newman and Redford, or even Beatty and Dunaway. The violence is graphic and the dialogue virulent: 'The workers are just a passive flock of sheep'; 'I've never killed a man, only a cop and a banker, and they don't count.' As things turned out, the film became a premonition from 1900 of the spirit of 1968, but could be written off. unjustly, as an attempt to cash in on the 'events'. But it did show that the fact that a film was set in the past and its heroes rode around in vintage cars had no bearing on its political nature.

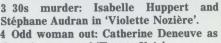
These major works of rétro entertainment and contestation were the high points of their respective styles. When











the private eye of 'Ecoute Voir'.

5 Ben Barka affair: Trintignant as the

Deray, an inconsistent film-maker at the best of times, tried to follow up his earlier success with Borsalino and Co (1974) and Le Gang (1976), the results (without Belmondo) were pretty lament-Canne (1977) presented a partial portrait of French society between 1940 and 1955, concentrating significantly on police corruption as a constant factor in French history. By the late 70s, however, the rétro cycle had largely worn itself out,

1 Rétro fashion: stars (Belmondo and

detective Nestor Burma in 'La Nuit de

Left Bank: Michel Galabru (right) as

Delon) and cars in 'Borsalino'.

Saint-Germain-des-Prés'.

artistically, politically and commercially. Bob Swaim's La Nuit de Saint-Germain-des-Prés (1977) attempted to recreate the 'existentialist' life of the postwar Left Bank, resurrecting Léo Malet's venerable private detective, Nestor Burma, to investigate the murder of an American jazzman. But the film turned into an exercise in pure nostalgia, with the trappings of superficial philosophical discussion, all night drug parties and modern jazz totally swamping the lacklustre whodunit plot. Michel Galabru as Burma was entertaining enough, but the film as a whole was rather pointless, even for ageing habitués of the Flore, the Deux Magots, or the one-time Rose Rouge. Nostalgia without politics, personality or punch-ups was destined to be unsatisfying.









journalist hero of 'L'Attentat'.
6 The police and 'le pouvoir': Michel Bouquet in 'Un Condé'.
7 Wasteland: Patrick Dewaere, Marie Trintignant in 'Série Noire'.

By the time Chabrol's Violette Nozière appeared in 1978 it seemed a personal postscript to the whole cycle. It is significant that Chabrol left out the political arguments sparked off by the Nozière case, possibly because he considered the stances struck at the time by both Left and Right to be rather silly. When Chabrol wants to be political, as in Nada or Les Noces Rouges, he has no need to go back in time in order to express his view. Violette Nozière appears as a Chabrol movie which just happens to be based on a true case of the 1930s, with a typically teeth-clenching view of petty bourgeois family life and doses of sideways Chabrolian humour. It is, for Chabrol, a remarkably sober, distanced film, taking no obvious parti pris towards its eponymous heroine.

Violette's progress towards a sort of redemption is, if anything, religious, but presented in a matter of fact way leaving the audience free to interpret it as they wish. Whatever else Chabrol's Violette may be, she is above any film-making fashion, above all from one which was completely played out.

THE POLITICS OF PARANOIA

The real style and feel of the 1970s went beyond fashion and far beyond nostalgia. Film after film (far too many to list in full) presented a singular and coherent view of the society they portrayed: the police, whose tentacles reach everywhere, are under the total control of political power and licensed to use all methods against those who step out of line; secret or 'parallel' police forces are so ubiquitous that any innocent individual may fall into their clutches; justice is politicised and class-based, more than ever it is neither done nor seen to be done; the rich and influential may get away with anything, with nothing to fear from the forces of order; the media care nothing for truth, all is spectacle and manipulation; within the established order only an occasional examining magistrate (juge d'instruction) or investigative journalist steps out of line, and he or she is as likely as not to end up dead. Underlying all is a justified paranoia. Literally anyone can fall victim to manipulation, and state and society create madness to brand and lock up those who stumble on uncomfortable truths or to create scapegoats for particular crimes and disorders.

If younger directors, led by Boisset and Corneau, grabbed much of the attention, more established film-makers made their contributions to the cycle, perhaps helped by the fact that the American post-Watergate paranoid cycle made the approach doubly attractive to the eyes of producers. André Cayatte continued to produce his inimitable cinematic pamphlets, but they lacked his earlier punch, and Cayatte seemed sadly stranded out of time, despite the commercial success of Mourir d'aimer (1970), Verdict (1974) and La Raison d'Etat (1978), much of which must be attributed to the presence of stars such as Annie Girardot, Jean Gabin, Sophia Loren and Jean Yanne. But Deray finally returned to form in 1978 with Un Papillon sur l'Epaule, in which Lino Ventura witnesses, without knowing it, a crime committed by a 'parallel' police force and wakes up one morning in a mental hospital. Robert Enrico contributed Le Secret (1974) and Pile ou Face (1980); Edouard Molinaro chipped in with Le Gang des Otages (1972), with Bulle Ogier, and José Giovanni with Dernier Domicile Connu

(1969), with Ventura and Marlène Jobert. Even Henri Verneuil took time off from Belmondo vehicles and his self-satisfied denunciations of intellectuals and the *cinéma d'auteur* to make $I\ldots$ comme Icare (1979), with Yves Montand, showing the slippage of democracy towards fascism.

The importance of Yves Boisset goes beyond his contribution to a cycle of films. In the arguments about 'recuperation' sparked off by Costa-Gavras' Z (1968) and his own L'Attentat (1972), Boisset made his own position crystal clear: 'There is in France a strong intellectual tradition that makes people ashamed to work for a mass audience. This is very strange in the case of leftwing cinéastes who make absolutely impenetrable films, supposedly for the working class, because they are slaves of a literary tradition. I think that today we should only make immediately accessible and readable films, based in genres easy for the public to accept, in which the lesson or question you want to propose to the public is shown through a consumerist spectacle. I don't say this because I want success, but because I consider it absolutely fundamental.3

After cutting his teeth on routine subjects in the 60s, this cinéaste de choc in love with American movies succeeded in delighting the public and enraging the Minister of the Interior with Un Condé (1970). The initial proposition is familiar: the police and the bad guys both use similar methods, but the police are exonerated by being on the right side. But Boisset overturns the moral applecart: a gangster, avenging a dead friend, accidentally kills a cop; the cop's friend, another cop, seeks a similar vengeance. Throughout the criminals have a sort of morality that the condé totally lacks, and when the cop goes too far his superiors cover for him. Boisset makes it clear that the police, hand in glove with le pouvoir, act outside the law, a point driven home both in the dialogue and in a harrowing scene in which a suspect is tortured.

In his subsequent films Boisset continued exploring the labyrinths of paranoia. L'Attentat, based on the Ben Barka affair, showed how the Gaullist regime branded political opponents as common criminals, while Le Juge Fayard dit 'Le Shérif' (1977) featured Patrick Dewaere as the most substantial of the 'good' juges d'instruction. Folle à Tuer (1975), based on Manchette's novel O Dingos, o Châteaux, is Boisset's madness film. Julie (Marlène Jobert) is released from a mental hospital by the hospital's very rich benefactor, played by Michel Lonsdale, to be employed as a nanny for his horrible young nephew. It is, however, all a plot by which Lonsdale wants to have his nephew killed and blame the 'mad' Julie. The unfortunate Julie, on the run from everyone with the obnoxious child

in tow, emerges as the sanest person in the film. Her 'madness' has stemmed from an inability to cope with a mad world, while the professional killer on her trail, played by Tomas Milian trailing memories of many a spaghetti Western behind him, is a complete maniac with a compulsive need to kill. He, however, has a place in the world thanks to people like Lonsdale, while Julie is born to run. Again over-subtlety is not in evidence (this is not a film for readers of R. D. Laing or Thomas Szasz), but Boisset's 'lesson or question' is, as always, abundantly clear to all.

Some may consider a tendency to spell out the obvious as a weakness of the whole cycle. In Enrico's Le Secret the message is even spelled out at the end in a voice-over: to protect themselves modern societies have created mechanisms they cannot control, and the innocent who stumble across these organisations are liable to end up in mental hospitals. But once the initial choice outlined by Boisset is made, criticism of this kind of ploy on behalf of cinematic subtlety is misplaced. Le Secret, from a novel by Francis Ryck, is in fact a very effective film, superbly performed by Jean-Louis Trintignant, Philippe Noiret and (once again) Marlène Jobert, which plays expertly on its initial ambiguity—is Trintignant mad or is his paranoia justified? The problem lies elsewhere: by the time Enrico made Pile ou Face, again with Noiret, in 1980, this kind of contestation had come to look standard, almost as if film-makers were playing safe, artistically and commercially, by embodying familiar ideas.

No such criticism can be applied to Corneau, an altogether more sober cinéaste than Boisset or Enrico. His madness film, Série Noire (1979), explores the world of a schizophrenic (Dewaere again) and is filmed in an improvisatory, nervous style, obviously influenced by Scorsese and with a strong dose of Patricia Highsmith. But the setting is the grande banlieue rather than the innercity mean streets, a region without history or culture, defined by the interaction between people and artificial landscape. This is Corneau's country. His first film, France Société Anonyme (1973) used the building sites of the banlieue as the décor of the near future, in which petty racketeers fight the state monopoly of legalised drugs. It is this sensitivity to provincial and suburban landscapes that gives Corneau's films their special feel, expanding the politics of paranoia beyond specific state organisations.

His Police Python 357 (1975) has been singled out by François Guérif (Le Cinema Policier Français, 1981) as the best French crime film of the decade—a debatable but tenable opinion. The setting is Orléans: its apartment blocks, hypermarkets and bourgeois houses on the banks of the Loire. A loner cop (Yves Montand) has an affair with a young shop assistant (Stefania Sandrelli) who, it turns out, is also the mistress of his boss (François Périer). She is trying to ditch Périer, who kills her in a fit of rage and in circumstances that make her

second lover a prime suspect. Montand, in charge of the investigation, thus has to steer the inquiry away from himself while trying to find the real murderer, and is even forced into disfiguring himself with acid to prevent identification. Périer has a crippled wife (Simone Signoret) who knows the truth and props up her husband in covering up the truth. Her monologues in favour of safety and protection of order have a wider significance than saving her husband's career and pension. Even her immobility can be taken as symbolic of an ossified bourgeoisie defending its own order at all costs. Meanwhile Montand sinks further into mental and physical degradation.

Thus Corneau transforms the familiar situation of a higher policeman above the law into both a political statement and a portrait of the disintegration of an individual trapped in a univers policier which extends into the tranquil waters of provincial France. The film is named after a gun, the hero is a loner cop with unconventional methods, but there all resemblance to Harry Callaghan ends. By comparison to American paranoid movies, Corneau's film is slowly paced, the tension is as much psychological as physical, and the social criticism goes much deeper. Police Python 357 is not an exhilarating movie, like the best American cop films, but it is a gripping and disturbing one.

Despite his ambitions, Corneau avoids the obvious pitfall of using the crime genre as a mere excuse for something 'better'. The basic plot of Police Python 357-an innocent man has to find the real murderer before he is caught-is familiar enough. Corneau makes his film something special by exploring the implications of such a tale in a precise social and geographical setting, rather as Paul Schrader did in Blue Collar, thereby teasing out the political consequences. Other young directors have made the fatal mistake of wanting to make, not crime films, but films about crime films. It is this ambition that spoils Patrice Chéreau's La Chair de l'Orchidée (1974), Hugo Santiago's Ecoute Voir (1978) and Noël Simsolo's Cauchemar (1980).

Ecoute Voir is an excellent illustration, being nothing less than a reflection on sound (écoute) and image (voir) forced into a thriller format. A female bisexual private eye, played by Catherine Deneuve complete with trenchcoat and homburg, foils the plan of the evil baron (Sami Frey) to take over the country by some new kind of radio transmission, allowing him to control the populace through their transistors. This absurd but amusing tale could have made an entertaining and subversive allegory about the media, but it loses itself in incomprehensible Borgesian labyrinths so that in the final scene décor and space are collapsed into phantasm, leaving this spectator at least eager only to see Deneuve's remarkable Claude (a crack shot, with a fine line in karate kicks) involved in more straightforward adventures. French crime films are interesting and vital enough in their own right not to need this kind of thing.

SOME NOTES FOR THE 1980s

There are other films and directors which could be discussed. I have singled out Boisset and Corneau because they are excellent illustrations of the general trends and because I believe they deserve to be better known and taken more seriously outside France. Other filmmakers, including Bertrand Tavernier, Alain Jessua and Jean-Pierre Mocky, deserve, and in Tavernier's case are getting, wider recognition. A summingup as of 1982 may perhaps best be done as a series of notes.

Directors: Jean-Pierre Melville has gone after the excellent Le Cercle Rouge (1970) and the disappointing Un Flic (1972); but other old hands, including Molinaro and Giovanni, continue working; new talents, led by Boisset, Corneau and Tavernier, are strengthening their reputations; the unpredictables, Deray and Verneuil, still produce good work among much dross; and, most important, the crime film still acts as the major vehicle for young French film-makers.

Writers: a vast fund of French and American writers to draw on—Manchette, Delacorta, Ryck, Jean-Pierre Bastid, Pierre Siniac, Jim Thompson, Patricia Highsmith...no problems on this score.

Stars: relative eclipse of Delon and Belmondo, though both are still capable of remarkable performances, sometimes in the most unlikely places (Stavisky, Monsieur Klein). The new style of the decade is nervous, slightly disconcerting, with Patrick Dewaere, Gérard Depardieu and Marlène Jobert to the fore. Among older stars, Yves Montand has, with the help of Costa-Gavras and Corneau, carved out an essential place for himself; Lino Ventura has shed his hard man image to portray, when not playing cuddly pères de famille, ordinary men trapped in circumstances beyond their control; Philippe Noiret can be relied upon to be good in almost anything; Catherine Deneuve, after Ecoute Voir and Le Dernier Métro, is now surely entering the summer of her career. Corneau's latest film, Le Choix des Armes, which opened in August 1981 but which I have not yet had a chance to see, teams Montand, Depardieu and Deneuve in what looks like a winning combination.

The Future: what happens now depends on what happens to France under the Socialists. But at the time of writing the Broglie murder scandal is still in full swing, while the règlement de comptes within the Gaullist SAC has led to a veritable bloodbath in Marseilles. The survival of the ancien régime will probably mean a continuation of the paranoid style for some time. Whatever happens, we may be sure that, as always, French crime films will continue to reflect and criticise in a vivid manner the society that produces them.

TELEVISION/

FRANCE

SOCIALISM

One of the most remarkable sights, on the night of the Socialist victory in the French presidential elections last May, was the huge crowd gathered in the Place de la Bastille chanting: 'Elkabbach à la lanterne!' Which, transposed to a British context, would have amounted to the public pillorying of Robin Day as he conducted an election broadcast. For Jean-Pierre Elkabbach, the Directeur de l'Information (approximately 'news editor') on French television's second channel Antenne 2, had become so closely identified in the public mind with the outgoing Giscardian administration that he had come to symbolise what many Mitterrand supporters considered to be systematic misinformation on the part of television. Nor was Elkabbach the only victim of this popular prejudice. Most of the well-known news and current affairs personnel—men such as Alain Duhamel or Patrick Poivre d'Arvor—used to protest in vain that they were simply journalists doing a job: they too suffered from the failure of French news and current affairs programmes to command any adequate degree of credibility.

There were good reasons why this was so. Both De Gaulle, who saw television as a necessary counterweight to what he believed were the oppositional views of the provincial press, and Pompidou, who in a famous speech enunciated the principle that television was 'the voice of France', had contributed to the institutionalisation of bias on French television;

Detailing the 'Affair of the Diamonds' was widely expected to lead to Gicquel's sacking

and Giscard d'Estaing, when he became President, had affirmed television's 'independence' while doing little by way of providing encouragement, resources or a decrease in government pressure to reverse the trend established by his predecessors. A measure of the degree of public cynicism with regard to television's impartiality was provided by the case of Roger Gicquel, until recently the news reader on the first channel TF1 and almost as much of an institution in France as Walter Cronkite was in America. For when, in October 1979, Gicquel included in his mid-evening bulletin an account of the 'Affair of the Diamonds' (stones given to President Giscard by Emperor Bokassa), with details of the accusations made against the President and his family, it was widely expected that he would, quite simply, be sacked. However typical, this was merely one of the innumerable incidents which have studded the recent history of French television*, all of which have helped to foster the belief that one of the earliest reforms incumbent on a Socialist administration was

the 'reform' of television.

Though political commentators insisted that the election of Mitterrand and a Socialist majority in Parliament could not fail to be a radical departure after 23 years of right-wing rule, there was, paradoxically, nothing very novel in the Socialists' desire to change the structures of broadcasting. It is difficult to find a period when the French have seemed satisfied with their arrangements for radio and television, and since the time of De Gaulle it has almost become a tradition for Presidents to tinker with the media. In the last 15 years television has been reorganised no less than three times: once after the strike at ORTF during the events of May 1968; again in 1972, when a Gaullist ex-deputy, widely believed to be a government man, was appointed Director of the ORTF; and yet again in 1974 when Giscard d'Estaing, immediately after his election, broke the ORTF into its separate parts and attempted to introduce competition and private funding into television. To the climate of instability and general demoralisation among the broadcasters was added a series of financial 'scandals' ranging from productions which ran wildly over budget to staff taking a cut from unauthorised advertising (so-called 'publicité clandestine').

However, 'reforms' of television have to date tended to take the form of purges, attempts to secure the simultaneous elimination of undesirable personnel and expensive financial practices. The post-1968 period saw many heads roll, among them that of André Harris who later became well known in Britain as one of the producers of Le Chagrin et la pitié, but job loss of this kind was by no means confined to that period. The new Socialist administration, though, gave signs of wishing to behave differently by appointing a former radio journalist, Georges Fillioud, to the post of Minister for Communication and by commissioning a

*Details are given in Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 16-23 July 1981.

JILL FORBES reports on the mixture

report on the reform of broadcasting which included in its brief ways in which French television might confront the challenge of the new technologies so that the French product might continue to figure in a greatly expanded market. Whatever the hopes and expectations of viewers (fostered by pre-election reports such as those carried in Le Monde in April 1981 suggesting that the media were a big election issue), criticisms of French television's quality and independence are likely, in the medium term, to be rendered irrelevant by technological

'It has almost become a tradition for Presidents to tinker with the media'

change, and the present government shows signs of being disturbed by this fact. The Moinot Commission (named after its Chairman, Pierre Moinot) reported at the end of September with the statement that its findings had been informed by the desire to achieve a triple objective, 'autonomy', 'decentralisation' and 'creativity', and it is worth looking more closely at what this document says since its recommendations will clearly be vital to the future of French television.

No doubt the most significant decision of all is Moinot's rejection of commercial broadcasting in favour of the maintenance of the 'monopoly' (renamed 'public service'). Jacques Thibau, who was a member of the Commission, forcefully restated the case for this in a recent interview with Cahiers du Cinéma (Télévision, numéro spécial, Autumn 1981), and his remarks go some way towards clarifying whether what is at issue is a 'monopoly' of production, transmission or reception. For Thibau, the Italian experience is a terrifying object lesson since the multiplication of television stations has, in his view, caused the 'death of Italian cinema'. Not that Thibau is particularly concerned that audiences should be created outside the home: what is of real importance is whether they consume a French or a foreign product. Thibau suggests that it is a lack of 'ideological strength' on the part of European countries which has caused them to be submerged by waves of 'transatlantic audio-visual material' that pose a real threat to their cultural identity. This is, in part, the old Gaullist fear of the Atlanticist Trojan Horse (Thibau is

'Thibau believes 15 years will elapse before technological change substantially affects broadcasting in France'

usually classified as a left-wing Gaullist and he was adviser on broadcasting to De Gaulle before taking on a similar job with Mitterrand). Yet such remarks translate a feeling that is widespread in the country, while the response is entirely consistent with French traditions of protectionism and autarky in cultural as in economic affairs. Thus it is probably significant that Thibau believes 15 years will elapse before technological change substantially affects broadcasting in France, while others point delightedly to the fact that European satellite channels have, for the time being, been attributed on a national basis, and that the slow growth of the video cassette market in France will allow its producers to catch up with video discs.

The Moinot Commission could not realistically have recommended a monopoly of reception, but it cannot be said that it has done much to encourage diversity in this field. Meanwhile, the right to transmit still resides firmly with the public service and this limitation is presented as essential to the maintenance of 'quality' broadcasting, free from advertising pressures, American imports and the tyranny of the ratings. As far as production is concerned, however, many questions remain. It is not clear, for example, why the 'monopoly' was unable to achieve satisfactory 'quality' in the period 1974-81. Even more important, perhaps, is the fact that the financing of the public service is not discussed at any length. Revenue from advertising is limited to 25 per cent of total television revenues. This at present amounts to about 50 per cent for TF1 and Antenne 2. But the report makes recommendations which imply either increasing the total revenue from advertising (which would appear incompatible with its view that advertising is a brake on 'quality') or sharing out advertising revenue differently so that, at the very least, the third channel FR3 got a slice of the cake (which would appear to leave the first two channels short of funds). And, as in Britain, the licence fee cannot always, or ever, be raised at will to cover budget

This problem confronted the ORTF back in 1974 when it was accused in Parliament of financial irresponsibility

and wastefulness. The solution then adopted was limited and indirect denationalisation through the separation of the production and transmission services; the former were taken over by the Société Française de Production (SFP), and the latter became the responsibility of the Channels who were supposed to commission productions from the SFP. The notion was that the Channels and the SFP would enter co-production agreements with private production companies and be better able to market their productions abroad. In practice, however, such arrangements tended to prove costinflationary and did little or nothing to inject a new spirit of dynamism into television production. Though Moinot Report advises that all television activities should take place within a single organisation, now called the Société Nationale de Télévision (SNT), it has not dissolved the SFP since there is a need for a semi-commercial company to handle links with the film industry and to produce for the cassette and disc market. This is clearly a chink in the monopoly.

The nationalisation of certain key industries and companies was a central plank of the Socialist election platform, so the reinforcement of public control of television is probably entirely consistent with Socialist thinking. Convincing proposals have been made for the creation of a buffer between the government and television in the shape of an Haute Autorite, a watchdog committee of nine only three of whom will be government appointees. Similarly the public will be more closely involved in television through a more representative Conseil National de l'Audiovisuel and decisions on appointments to key posts (such as that of news editor) will be left to the broadcasters themselves.

It remains to be seen whether these proposals, which fulfil undertakings given by the Socialists before the elections, will have the desired effect. But elsewhere Moinot is disappointing in its efforts to carry through election pledgesespecially the most interesting promise to decentralise. Since the break up of the ORTF in 1974 France has had a regional television channel, FR3, but the channel has always been underfunded and only Lille, Lyon and Marseille have fully equipped television stations. In pursuit of their belief in self-management and self-expression, the Socialists promised political and economic decentralisation of all kinds and, given the cultural impact of the media, the decentralisation of broadcasting was thought indispensable to achieve these aims.

It is now suggested that the Paris region, Rennes, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Strasbourg and Corsica should be equipped with television stations, that a national federation of regional television companies should take over from FR3 with responsibility for negotiating the division of resources and the networking of programmes, and that 22 'Regional Communications Councils' should be created to include representatives from the public, broadcasting, the local press

and advertising. Once again the stumbling block remains money, for the Haute Autorité decides in the first instance how much regional television as a whole shall get, and any shortfall is expected to be made up from advertising. Clearly miracles cannot be worked overnight but the Socialists raised expectations ranging from the creation of regional stations on the lines of those existing in Germany to the provision of facilities for access television and community programme-making. Moreover radio has fared extremely well compared with television with proposals to extend local radio via the public service, and with the licensing of a quite extraordinary number of local radio stations with modest programmes (often music and news) and a limited range (at the last count there were more than 20 of these in the Paris region).

The situation Jean-Luc Godard deplored in Sur et sous la communication still obtains: he still has to go via Paris to communicate with his neighbour using television, and the present proposals do not seem designed to ensure a flowering of regional identities or the rediscovery of local particularisms. Two hundred years of Jacobinism have not been abolished at a stroke and among the reasons why must certainly be included the threat to the national identity, already imperfectly reinforced by television according to some influential politicians, if regional identities were too successfully fostered. The Socialists have not been able to surmount this contradiction.

'Jean-Luc Godard . . . still has to go via Paris to communicate with his neighbour using television'

On reading the Moinot Report it is tempting to see an analogy between its proposals and the academic approach to broadcasting in France. Until recently, French studies set aside the content analysis so familiar in this country and concentrated either on dire warnings that the media were a capitalist conspiracy (A. and M. Mattelart, De l'usage des médias en temps de crise) or on round denunciations of the trivialising impact they have had on 'high culture' (R. Debray, Le Pouvoir intellectuel). Moinot's subdued nationalism and emphasis on 'quality' show the mark of these traditions. On the other hand, the French have long been fascinated by cybernetics and are, by now, notorious for the application of communications theory to a wide variety of fields, and here again Moinot betrays a preoccupation with structures which, though characteristic, is rather at the expense of the programmes. Although any attempt to advise on the day-to-day running of television would have run counter to the Commission's own proposals, it is rather disappointing for the viewer that so little

that is positive is said about programme content.

The Commission recommends, for example, that audiences should be able to choose between channels, that the 'cultural segregation' of minority viewing times should be ended, and that television should 'set an example' to children. It is also particularly concerned that television should not simply be a vehicle for material produced elsewhere but that it should create its own programmes. In practice, this means the limitation of the number of coproductions which, since 1974, have effectively reduced in-house output, a limit to the number of American serials imported and, perhaps most interesting, a new relationship with the film industry. There is to be a 60 per cent quota of French language films (including television films); and of foreign films, more are to come from the Third World and fewer from the United States.

The purchase of films for television should be at a price high enough to cover a substantial proportion of production costs, and part of the receipt from sales to television will automatically be reinvested in the production of French films and the payment of residuals to performers. The total number of films screened will be reduced and the purchase of films must not constitute 'too large a part' of television's overall budget. However, these proposals should be seen less as an attempt to protect the cinema than as a means to close the frontiers to American imports so as to give domestic production a chance to recover, and their success thus depends very much on the dynamism of the State enterprise.

It is said that the electorate have allowed the Socialists a prolonged 'honeymoon period'. But significant changes in broadcasting have taken place since last summer and it does not seem too early to take a critical look at their impact on television. As a matter of fact, the Government has not got off to a good start. It was widely reported in anti-Giscardian newspapers such as Le Monde and Le Matin that the Socialist victory had 'let a breath of fresh air' into the stuffy atmosphere of the rue Cognacq-Jay, and some even claimed to see significance where undoubtedly none was intended-for example, in the fact that the news reader, Poivre d'Arvor, wore a black tie on the day after the election! (Le Monde, 14 May 1981). A Socialist spokesman, when asked what the Government intended to do with the incumbent news and current affairs editors, replied 'Nothing'-a remark which produced a spate of congratulations that Socialist censorship had not replaced Giscardian.

But within two-and-a-half months of Mitterrand's election all that had changed: the President had already complained of the coverage (or lack of it) of his speeches and the Controllers of the television channels and Radio-France had all been replaced. Some, such as Maurice Ulrich at Antenne 2, were anxious to resign; others, like Claude

Contamine at FR3, went quietly; but Jacqueline Baudrier refused to leave Radio-France until something equally attractive had been found for her elsewhere. Furthermore, Jean-Louis Guillaud, the Controller of the first channel, flatly refused to resign, and when the Government finally secured his removal the Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy, wrote that he found the decision to go 'in accordance with the logic of the present situation' (Le Monde, 24 July 1981). Is this remark to be interpreted as a belief that the Controllers of television should be political appointees?

Such changes would perhaps be more disturbing in Britain where the public servants are more traditionally immutable. Nevertheless, a disquieting precedent has been established for future

'Whatever Desgraupes' experience . . . he is an old man in a young world, and this does not bode well . . .'

changes of government. Another, slightly distasteful, aspect of Socialist-effected change was the extent to which it resembled musical chairs: one lot came in as the other went out; one idol—Elkabbach—was smashed and replaced by another—Pierre Desgraupes. Indeed, the appointment of Pierre Desgraupes as Controller of Antenne 2 is so heavy with significance that it is worth dwelling a moment on the career of this remarkable man.

Desgraupes is both a performer and an administrator who first made his name as one of the producers of Cing colonnes à la une, a monthly news magazine programme which went out from 1959 to 1965. The programme commanded huge audiences, at a time when there was still only one television channel, and it became renowned for a slightly malicious style of interviewing combined with extensive international coverage, particularly of events such as the Algerian War. The programme remains a touchstone of quality for French television. In 1968 Desgraupes seemed to have compromised himself by putting his name to a protest document, but this did not prevent him being appointed Directeur de l'Information on the first channel by Prime Minister Chaban-Delmas in 1969. The fact that he was considered a 'dangerous leftie' by some Gaullists has contributed to the belief that the period 1969-72 was one when, under Desgraupes, television news and current affairs regained credibility.

Clearly, there exists something akin to a Desgraupes myth, yet what is interesting about this man, beyond his obvious talent and his ability to get others to work with him, is that he made his name in the heroic age of French television, before the existence of any large-scale government intervention, under the Socialist government of the Fourth

Republic. Desgraupes is therefore 'clean'. But there is also a sense in which the broadcasters of creative talent, who were forced to leave television in 1968 or 1972. are returning in force less because it is their just retribution than because the last decade has seen little new talent coming forward. Whatever Desgraupes' experience, the fact cannot be escaped that he is an old man in a young world, and this does not bode well for the Moinot Commission's brave new departure. And it should also be added that though the Fourth Republic Socialists may have refrained from interfering with television, their record with radio-at the time a far more important medium-was less than happy: as Jean Calvel recalls, in Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 16-23 July 1981, the present Minister of the Interior Gaston Deferre, when Minister of Information in the postwar government, 'axed' some 1,000 of the 4,000 employees of the radio in an attempted purge of Communists.

Finally, what of the programmes? News and current affairs will clearly continue to attract much attention, not least because this is the one area of French television's indisputable professional competence—sometimes likened to the Red Army war machine within the hopelessly bureaucratic structure of the Soviet state. It is much too early to judge, of course, but it ought perhaps to be noted that the Directeur de l'Information at FR3 has already been shifted from his post because he was responsible for programming a film of dubious quality on nothing other than the Red Army!

The Moinot Commission's complaints about foreign penetration seem to be borne out by the facts. In the week of 9-15 January 1982, taking all channels together, there was a total of two French films and two French serials (including a serialisation of La Chartreuse de Parme with Marthe Keller which will certainly be sold abroad); two foreign films and one foreign serial excluding American; but eight American films and four American serials (one of which, admittedly, was Dallas). This same week also included a French dramatisation of Neil Simon's play Barefoot in the Park, a documentary on rock music which featured mainly American performers, and a variety of imported children's programmes including Paddington and The Wombles. The majority of these items were transmitted at peak viewing times leaving very little space in the schedules for indigenous productions.

In view of all this, the Moinot Commission's lack of enthusiasm for greater international co-operation via satellite is understandable. But it is odd that it did not propose more desperate measures, for the need to act is urgent. A SOFRES opinion poll, in January 1982, showed that 68 per cent of respondents were 'not at all satisfied' with television, mainly because it had ceased to be entertaining and become didactic. The Government is apparently worried—and with cause, for the joke said to be going round Television House is 'if only the Socialists were in office!'

SATYAJIT

Satyajit Ray, at sixty-one, doesn't look like a man sliding into the autumn of a distinguished career. In fact, despite alarms about his blood pressure, and a painful and at times incapacitating back, he doesn't look his age at all. He says he has never been fitter, and has certainly seldom been either busier with new projects or more appreciated as one of the

giants of world cinema.

When he started shooting his new film, based on Rabindranath Tagore's Ghare Baire and called Home and the World in English, it was the final fulfilment of an old dream. He had wanted to make the Tagore novel about upper middle-class life in Bengal as his first film, some years before Pather Panchali surprised the 1956 Cannes Festival. He was prevented then, after writing a scenario, by his refusal to compromise with the commercial producers of the day and the fact that there was anyway much difficulty in casting it. Now he is too big a figure in India to be expected to tailor his material for any particular market, and is finding new outlets outside his home city of Calcutta with increasing ease. Internationally, the French and the Americans, the former after neglecting him for years, have honoured or are about to honour him. In New York last year, there was a highly successful complete retrospective of his work at the Museum of Modern Art; while the Cannes Festival is about to give him a special award.

The case of the French is very curious, considering the special award for Pather Panchali all those years ago. His breakthrough came after The Music Room and Charulata had appeared on televison and later at a Paris cinema, the owners of which were astonished and gratified to get an eight-month run from The Music Room. And in November 1980, French television devoted what was virtually a whole evening to Ray, including an hourlong interview, a screening of The Middle Man and the first showing of Pikoo, a 27minute short specially commissioned by the network. There are now plans for more Ray films to be shown in Paris, and in addition to all this comes a new book about him by H. Micciolli called L'Age d'Homme which Ray regards as the best study of his films to date. Another by Max Tessier will follow.

'I don't really know quite what hap-pened in France,' he says. 'But it was certainly rather odd. After they had shown the Apu trilogy and then Devi, there were offers. Then they seemed to peter out. You see, the Indian cinema is often its own worst enemy. Letters don't get replied to, prints fail to arrive or are virtually unshowable when they do. Europeans have only so much patience. And that, I think, was the trouble. Even the very gracious tribute to my work which was mounted in India itself at Bangalore Filmotsav in 1980 was full of bad prints. And since there were often no

Satyajit Ray, who here talks to DEREK MALCOLM. will give a Guardian Lecture at the National Film Theatre in May. Photos by Nemai Gosh.

subtitles, and most could not speak Bengali, it was in part an effort wasted. Without wishing to sound arrogant, I don't think it was a case of the French not appreciating my films. I think they were difficult to get, and they may have given up on me. Yes, it is curious that The Music Room was particularly liked because I thought Charulata might be more to the French taste. But, at any rate, Pikoo was also a great success and since it was my first television film, that pleased me a lot.'

Originally, Ray had decided to do a documentary for French television on child labour in India, which is illegal but is still extensively used. But permission proved difficult, for obvious reasons, and he then remembered a story he had written some fifteen years ago about the young son of a prosperous Bengali family who, within the space of one day, finds that the adult world around him is on the edge of an abyss. His parents are near to separation (his mother having taken a lover), his father is facing financial ruin and his old grandfather is dying from heart trouble. But he is too young to recognise any of the signals.

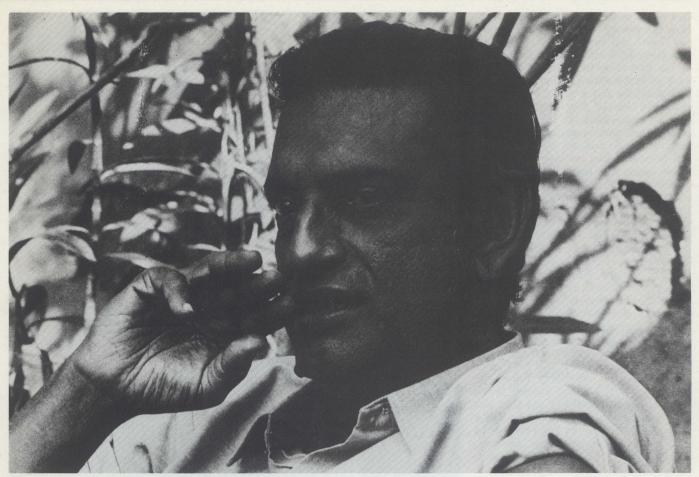
The film is very simple, direct and eloquent-an anecdote bathed in sunlight with intimations of darkness. And Ray's special affinity with both the very young and the very old is particularly

evident. Sadgati (Deliverance), the film he has recently completed for Indian television, is more substantial, though only fifty minutes. Made in Hindi rather than Bengali, like The Chess Players, it is also taken from a story by Munshi Premchand, written some thirty years ago. Ray shot it in ten days around Raipur and feels it is one of the best things he has done. Certainly it is shot with remarkable economy, contains several excellent performances and encapsulates within it most of the concerns of many of the younger Indian directors, whose films were shown at Calcutta's Filmotsay.

An untouchable arrives at the door of a brahmin to ask a favour. The brahmin agrees to find an auspicious date for his daughter's wedding but extracts some favours while he has a meal and a siesta. The untouchable must sweep his yard and chop some wood. Already ill, the man collapses cutting the wood and is found dead. This precipitates a crisis since the corpse lies close to the road used by those going to the village well and an awkward police investigation could follow. Anxious but hardly guiltstricken for making the harijan work so hard, the brahmin dumps the body, at dead of night, near the river. All this without touching it, by using a halter round the dead man's ankle. Then he sprinkles holy water on the spot where

Premchand's story was angry and bitter at the exploitation of one man by the other. But Ray's film eschews all polemic. He simply tells the story with a crisp emphasis on the situation's enormity and fills it in with telling detail. 'People have asked me why I chose not to update the story,' he says, 'but I think it has enough contemporary relevance as it is. Nowadays, perhaps, the harijan might have refused to chop the wood. Yet dependence upon the brahmins is still very considerable out in the countryside and the appalling exploitation of the caste system is still evident. I think the film proves how little has really changed.'

Does he like making films for television? 'Yes, I do. Because obviously you get a bigger audience. But actually I didn't think of either Pikoo or Sadgati as a television film. I made Sadgati, in particular, exactly as if it was an ordinary feature. I didn't alter my style at all. Perhaps there are a few more close-ups,



Satyajit Ray at sixty-one.

but that is all.' Did he enjoy making it in Hindi, a language in which he is not an expert? 'Well, I'm getting better, and I don't think that it makes too much difference. In one way, it is very much an advantage, because the Hindi actors are so good. One has, of course, to use professional actors because they need the least guidance and instruction. But more and more of them are willing to do more challenging things, and I admire the new generation greatly. We are not so lucky in the Bengali cinema. A lot of the fresh talent comes from elsewhere. I'm pleased to use it. I can't yet write my scripts in Hindi but I can give instructions to the actors. Ghare Baire is in Hindi and if that means a wider public for it, so much the better.'

Turning to Home and the World, he says that it was perhaps a good thing that he was not able to make the film when he was a young man. His script, when he looked at it again, was not a good one and he tore it up and started again. 'It's a story that really had to be filmed, very strong and very moving. Like the Premchand story, it still holds good. And I do want to go back to Tagore from time to time because he was, after all, a great master. Besides, I love to do research on the past, to get things absolutely right. There are three central figures in the film, and the first of them is a zamindar who lives in a small town quite happily with his wife. He is a very liberal man but these were the days when women were kept in purdah and he regrets it. He believes his wife has to meet other men, if only to understand him better. Perhaps he also feels that anyway it is likely to be to his advantage. At first his wife says no, she is perfectly happy with him. Then she agrees.

The film is set during the time when the British had decided to divide and rule the Hindu and Moslem communities, particularly in West Bengal, and, amid the political confusion, a friend of the zamindar arrives at the village as his guest. He is a leader of the nationalist movement and intends to address the local community in the zamindar's palace. The wife hears him from behind the curtains and afterwards her husband arranges a meeting. That is how she comes out of seclusion, and then it is a case of an eternal triangle. The zamindar is introverted and quiet, the leader dynamic. There is a total contrast between them. And the leader's attraction for the wife is also a matter of exploiting her. "We need women like you," he says and proceeds to use her for his own ends. What becomes clear is that he is a hollow man, and as riots break out and the situation gets out of control, the zamindar knows that he should have told his friend to leave. But he doesn't, because he wants his wife to find out for herself. Eventually she realises her mistake, and the husband goes out to face the people. In a way, he is almost a spokesman for Tagore himself-a wellmeaning man who digs his own grave. And the story, though very ironical, really has no moral unless it be that individual wisdom has very little value when it comes to political upheaval.

'Predominantly, I suppose, the film is

a love story set against a stormy political background. I have stuck to history as much as possible and the scale is fairly big. There is, for instance, an ornate and large set. The story is told in the form of diaries in the original novel and I have amplified that idea. The film is in four sections, each with a different style and told from a different point of view. The first section is as the wife sees it, the second moves to the husband's view, the third to the political leader's and the last to my own. My section is most like the normal, relatively impersonal narrative. It is all quite fascinating to do, and rather difficult. But the story is a challenge in itself, and I'm merely adding my own to it.

Is the film's political theme relevant to today? 'No, but I think it is important to understand it just the same. It is important in our present confused situation to make films of classics, just to inform people of what happened. And what happened was really quite simple. These were Hindu landlords in a predominantly Moslem area, and the political leader, unlike the zamindar, does not think that Moslems are part of India. He is fomenting trouble between the two communities. But, more than that, he is calling for a nationalist movement that would react against the British. It was primarily a movement based on the middle classes and calling for such things as the wearing of specifically Indian clothes, which was absurd because there was often no substitute in the shops. It was bound first to cause trouble and then to peter out.

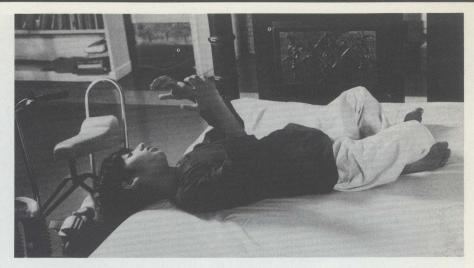
'But this is not really a political film.

It is about people first, like all my films. How can you make a political film without them? Not very well. My next project, however, is more in that line. It will be the first story to be filmed from the work of Mahasweta Devi, one of India's best novelists and a niece, incidentally, of Ritwik Ghatak, the Bengali director. She is understandably obsessed with exploitation, particularly of tribals. And that, rather like Sadgati, is what the film will be about. But its tone will be different, since the writer's style is very different from that of Premchand. I have always tried to be faithful to the writers I adapt, to achieve the quality of their writing within the film. It doesn't mean that everything has to be the same. But the tone has to be right, and the purpose behind the story must be similar.

Home and the World, Ray says, will probably turn out to be the costliest film he has made in Bengal to date, requiring about half the money spent on The Chess Players. And clearly the way that film was handled still rankles with him. 'It had an excellent run in Calcutta, but then the producer sold it to a distributor in Bombay who effectively ruined its exhibition. First he para-dubbed Hindi over the English sections, and that was an absolute mess. Apparently, he had a couple of friends do the job, probably to save money. What was worse, however, was that despite full houses it was suddenly taken off.

'Most of my friends, in fact, were not able to see it at all. I can only think that the film was a nuisance to the big producers, and that was their way of getting back at me. You see, the big stars came to me. I didn't go to them. They wanted to work in the film. But it meant that they were away from Bombay for quite long stretches, and this caused resentment. Had Chess Players been a success, the situation, they felt, might have got out of hand. Bombay is very insecure these days. Actors are getting more ambitious, and they want to do quality work as well as earn money in commercial vehicles. This, of course, is all to the good for Indian cinema, and despite my reservations that government subsidy will automatically produce good filmmakers, I think the future looks bright. We have a number of good young directors, we are beginning to sort out the distribution problem by encouraging smaller cinemas which can cope with other films apart from spectaculars. And I think the public is responding to better stuff. But things change very slowly in India and one gets impatient. I said "never again" after Chess Players and what happened to it. But you get wiser as you get older, and you begin to avoid obvious mistakes, like losing control to the wrong people. Directors should have their rights, just like producers and distributors.

The one major upset Ray has had over the last year was the death of Bansi Chandragupta, the set designer for *The Chess Players* and a perfectionist he had worked with for much of his career. 'That,' says Ray, 'was a terrible shock to us. It robbed me not only of a great





Top: Arjun Gaha Thakurta in 'Pikoo'; bottom: Om Puri, Smita Patil in 'Sadgati'.

personal friend but of a really brilliant collaborator. I knew Bansi from 1943 when he came to Calcutta to study painting. In 1947 we formed the Calcutta Film Society when Bansi was working for a Bengali producer. He was so good that when Renoir came to Calcutta a couple of years later he chose him to help with The River. We had the habit of making Sunday outings to the countryside and Bansi used to take still photographs continuously. I remember that it took him months to select the right cottage for Harihar in Pather Panchali. And later, when we were working on Aparajito, he rebuilt the house in the studios.

'He worked for me for fifteen years, from Pather Panchali to Pratidwandi, and then he went to Bombay so that he could get more experience than I could give him, and perhaps more money. That was in 1970, and I don't think he was all that happy in that much more commercial atmosphere. He came back to help me with The Chess Players, and I think it was the summit of his achievement. He

was such a perfectionist that we had rows sometimes—I wanted to get on, he refused to let me until everything was just right. But I'll never forget him as a friend and as an artist. His death was just so absurd. He had a terrible toothache in New York, and I advised him to take antibiotics. But he just had the tooth pulled, at a time when he was very tired after the flight to New York. The next day he had a massive heart attack. I was so shocked, I immediately returned to India.'

Ray's film-making methods have not substantially changed over the years and he depends on only a few close colleagues like Chandragupta. 'I like to think of my films as being "composed". I like to plan everything myself, and to be able to do most things too. I leave room for improvisation when I'm shooting, particularly on location. But everything is planned in the head as well as on paper. It's a very economical way of working—one ensures that the cost doesn't go up. One has to



'Pikoo': Ray lines up a shot.

be more and more careful about that, so usually my films are edited in the camera. I never take a shot for safety's sake. If it is really good, I don't do a second takethe maximum is three times. Of course you can have accidents and have to do more. But that is my general practice. For example, I had a very good cameraman, but after each shot he would say that we had to take another. I asked him why, but he was never precise. So I decided over the years to take the camera myself. I realised that, working with new actors, they are more confident if they don't see me, they are less tense. I remain behind the camera. And I see better and can get the exact frame. I am so used to doing the framing now that I couldn't work in any other way.

'As for the result of my methods, I suppose some would accuse me of nurturing a classical form. I certainly like to follow a simple, classical structure. My films are stories first and foremost, because India has a great tradition in that respect. Of course, a certain amount of commitment is unavoidable. But I never want to be a propagandist. I don't think anybody is in a position to give answers to social problems-definitive answers at any rate. Besides, no propaganda really works. Renoir once said to me: "There are lots of anti-war films being made. I made La Grande Illusion in 1938, and that didn't stop the war!" He was absolutely right. I know I have been criticised for not getting to grips with things, for turning my face away from strife and struggle, wickedness and violence. And it is true that there are no

rapes and murders in my films. The fact is that they just don't interest me in the same way as does, say, the struggle of an inadequate man trying to be good.

Somehow I feel that an ordinary person—the man in the street if you like—is a more challenging subject for exploration than people in the heroic mould. It is the half shades, the hardly audible notes that I want to capture and explore. There is also the fact that violence in our country somehow becomes debased. An element of pettiness, of crudity, creeps in. And that repels me. Of course, there's a kind of mystique of violence in the West. But we don't have that. I cannot imagine any Indian raising evil to the level of a work of art, like Buñuel. In any case, I am another kind of person, one who finds muted emotions more interesting and challenging.

As for my philosophy, I don't think God is a useful thing to believe in. I don't see the necessity of that at all. I think it is more important now, in view of what has been happening in the world, to believe in scientific knowledge. I'm very optimistic, but I think a certain amount of pessimism exists in me too-that's why I love to lose myself in my work. I tend to be fatalistic about India. What could you do? What can you do? All the politicians and the parties have been disappointing. There isn't now a single person you can look up to. Corruption continues on all levels, public and private. There is nothing to guide you. There's a lack of real values I find very disturbing.

'That is all the more a reason to

understand people, to find out what makes them as they are. Even the British we had to understand! Because the whole intellectual middle-class of India was a product of British rule. Without colonialism and the British education, there would have been no terrorism. The British gave the Bengalis a liberal education, and that ultimately turned them into revolutionaries. You created your own enemies, and it took about a hundred years—the beginning of the process is described in *Charulata*.

'I sympathise with the young people who want change at all costs, who are impatient and audacious. But I also see them growing up, getting older and having doubts. When I worked in advertising before making films, I had friends who were politically active and supported the Soviet Union. But I have watched them over the years, and now they are advertising executives, trying to rationalise the change in themselves. I feel a bit wiser than they. But I too am an activist—as an artist. That's my way. And I understand art as the expression of a creative personality that has some permanent worth.

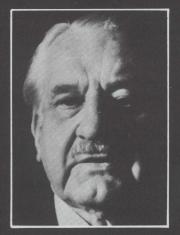
'The fusion of Eastern and Western values, which I got through my education, has been a great strength to me. But you have to have the backing of your own culture. Even when I made my first film, the awareness was there. I had a Western education, I studied English. But more and more over the last decade or so, I have been going back and back to the history of my own country, my people, my past and my culture.'

JACK REED'S CHRISTMAS PUPPY

Jonathan Rosenbaum reflects on REDS



Oleg Kerensky



Adela Rogers St Johns



Will Durant



Dame Rebecca West



Henry Miller

ON THE UNRELIABILITY OF MEMORY

'Was it 1913 or '17?' wonders the first ancient voice, male and faltering, after a burst of vigorous ragtime has faded out, before the opening credits have left the screen. 'I can't remember now-I'm beginning to forget all the people I used to know.' 'Do I remember Louise Bryant?' asks the voice of another male oldster. 'Why, of course; I couldn't forget her if I tried.' A third witness of that period, female, appears on the right of the screen against a black background, lit like a Richard Avedon portrait. 'I can't tell you,' she replies to an unheard question. 'I might sort of scratch my memory, but not at the moment ... you know, things go and come back again.'

At once the conscience and the Greek chorus of Reds, the 32 'witnesses' who prattle and reminisce about the real characters and events-John Reed, Louise Bryant, Eugene O'Neill, Emma Goldman, World War I, the Russian Revolution—are immediately perceived as human, charming and indispensable; without them, the film and its achievement could not even begin to exist. Like the gaggle of gossiping locals who occupy the foreground of several pivotal shots in Orson Welles' The Magnificent Ambersons, they embody the sense of community and popular wisdom that the film defines itself in relation to-the multifaceted oral history that paradoxically buries the characters at the same time that it keeps them alive for us.

Yet from the outset, the fallibility of these survivors is stressed as much as their reliability. Later on, they will contradict one another (on matters as disparate as John Reed's talent as a poet and US involvement in WW1), get names wrong and exhibit other confusions, refuse to speak or speculate on certain matters ('I'm not a purveyor of neighbourhood gossip, nossir, that's not my job'); but here they are already bearing witness to their shortcomings-sometimes knowingly, sometimes not. One witness worries about the correct Greenwich Village location: 'It was Christopher Street, and I was thinking about another street down there instead ... Sometimes I have lapses like that.' Another virtually places political affiliation in the realm of irrelevance: 'I've forgotten all about it. Were there socialists? I guess there must have been, but I don't think they were of any importance—I don't remember them at all.' Still another shrugs off the importance of romantic entanglements: 'I know that Jack went around with Mabel Dodge, and then went around with another gal, and then went around with Louise Bryant ... It never impinged on my own personal life: I like baseball.'

It is within such parameters that Warren Beatty situates his own history and

audience, his own appeals to us. And while it might enhance our pleasure in some cases if each of the witnesses were identified when he or she is speaking-so that we would all know, for instance, that the codger commenting about sexual attitudes in the 1910s is Henry Miller, the one in a WW1 outfit singing 'Over There' is George Jessel, and the fellow who good-naturedly mutters 'I urged the deportation of all alien Commonists (sic)' is Hamilton Fish-the absence of their names during their appearances can be justified strategically and aesthetically. Surely the fact that some participants are well known (Rebecca West, Will Durant) while others are not (acquaintances of Reed and Bryant in Portland) is less important than the democratic equality their anonymity grants them: they are here dialectically, as real contemporaries of the fictionalised characters, not as stars. And the fact that the rest of the movie already tends to keep us busy spotting the historical names—whether these are Floyd Dell or Aleksandr Kerensky (played, apparently, by a relative, Oleg Kerensky, who doubles as a witness), Max Eastman or Leon Trotsky-suggests that name-tags here would create a cluttered effect.

In one of the several graceful rhyme effects established by Beatty between the

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.

Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire

US and Russia in the fictive, 'Hollywood' parts of the film, the question of John Reed's 'credentials' allowing him to speak at a political rally comes up twice: at an American Socialist Party meeting in 1916, when he espouses war resistance (and is told he has no credentials, being a mere journalist), and at a revolutionary assembly the following year in Petrograd, when he expresses the solidarity of American workers (and is told that he needs no credentials, that everyone present has them). The essential fact about all the witnesses is that, in the final analysis, they have no credentials beyond what we see and hear of them-which proves to be more than enough. For all their individual memory lapses, their proximity in time to the people and events depicted in Reds-which camera and microphone suffice to reveal-gives them an authenticity to which the remainder of the film can't pretend to

Collectively, they assume the role of the film's narrator, the guiding consciousness and authorial voice that traditionally needs no name in third-person narrative. At the same time, they foreground the issue of their unreliability as individual commentators, creating a dispersed texture that is quite different from the unilateral continuity and supposed truth of, say, Welles' impersonal third-person narration in Ambersons. Critics, of course, can be forgetful too; when Pauline Kael argues that 'In technique, Reds is the least radical, the least innovative epic you can imagine,' she can't be remembering the witnesses, or Beatty's use of them.

ON THE UNRELIABILITY OF HOLLYWOOD

'Paramount Has Made a Communist Propaganda Epic,' trumpeted the headline to an outraged editorial in the American business weekly Barron's of 14 December 1981, but not many other critical commentaries to date appear to share this worry. Even Ronald Reagan, after attending a Presidential screening with Beatty and Diane Keaton, reportedly said something to the effect that the film shows up the Communists for what they are. Between his response and the Barron's editorial looms the whole knotty problem of accepting the premise of the 'revolutionary' blockbuster even theoretically. (Given the sources of financingincluding a novel arrangement with Barclays' Mercantile Industrial Finance Ltd, inspired by British tax law, whereby the film was sold prior to release and then leased back—as well as anticipated revenues, it's difficult to conceive of an investment that knowingly betrays those interests.) The curious notion that Hollywood or its European counterparts could produce a truly and unequivocally progressive spectacle—what one might call the Red Balloon fallacy, recalling the title of Serge Toubiana's review of 1900 in Cahiers du Cinéma-continues to be as much a facet of Hollywood myth and its policy of containment as it is a popular utopian leftist dream.

The utopian idealism of John Reed himself, however, was in many ways compatible with such a dream. According to his biographer Robert A. Rosenstone, the Paterson Pageant organised by Reed for the IWW silk strike, held at Madison Square Garden in 1913, two years before the action of Reds begins, 'diverted attention from the central issues', namely 'hours and wages', and the long-range overall effect it had on the strike was disastrous. (In fairness to Reed, it might be said that he learned from such blunders, and grew substantially in political maturity afterwards.) So, too, one might protest that Beatty drains the real politics out of Reed's life-the issues of class and revolution-for the sake of their traditional Hollywood replacements, romance and spectacle.

According to this argument, the radical

lifestyles of Reed and Bryant are either diluted beyond recognition (by such things as severely limiting the degree of promiscuity practised by both) or subsumed into sentimental Norman Rockwell magazine covers of cosy domesticity in New York, Provincetown and Croton. Thus the gift-wrapped puppy given by Jack to Louise under one of the film's many Christmas trees undermines their rhetoric about free love as effectively as the adorable Russian tot briefly encountered by Louise in the hospital during the final scene, wistfully standing in for the child they never got around to having. Both are characteristic emblems of the narcissism projected by Hollywood stars like Beatty and Keaton. Significantly, Jack Nicholson as Eugene O'Neill-in what might well be his best and most delicately shaded performance since Easy Rider-establishes himself more sharply as an erotic presence than either of the leads. He shares this quality, moreover, with Jerzy Kosinski as Grigory Zinoviev, whose role in the film also challenges the Reed-Bryant relationship, but from the left rather than the 'apolitical' right.

Central to the Hollywood cosmetics job performed on history is the treatment of Louise Bryant and the performance of Diane Keaton—separate but related issues in the film's overall strategies. Regarding the former, Beatty's use of Bryant as the principal identification figure—a partial equivalent to the semifaceless reporter Thompson in Citizen Kane, following in the wake of a mysterious, heroic myth (Reed) and pulling the audience along with her as she goesseverely limits the character as a representation of the real Louise Bryant.* Regarding the latter, it is worth noting widespread dissatisfaction with Keaton in Reds that is currently being expressed, at least in the US. In a Washington, DC cinema, during Bryant's (fictional) trek across Finland in search of Reed, a sceptical spectator reportedly sang out 'La-dee-da', Keaton's tagline as Annie Hall, to loud laughter and applause-suggesting part of the nature of the problem.

One might compare this response to the disaffection of the public with the character of the film director played by Jean-Pierre Léaud in Last Tango in Paris. In both cases, a formerly indulged romantic icon-New Wave adolescent cinéphile, flighty and eccentric starbecomes stale, loses conviction and glamour. And the superimposed hints of Keaton's characters in Annie Hall, Interiors and Manhattan, whether willed or not, saddles Bryant with the contemporary tics of a Woody Allen heroine, making the character less than ideal as a credible leftist model. As Veronica Geng has aptly noted, 'The movement in her

*According to Laura Cottingham ('What Reds Won't Tell You About Louise Bryant,' Soho News, 22 December 1981), Bryant was somewhat more substantial as an independent thinker and journalist than the movie suggests. A recently reprinted excerpt from her 1918 book Six Red Months in Russia seems to

bear this out.

face reflects a mind that's a garden of second thoughts; as soon as she asserts something, she takes it back,' so that her 'outbursts in Reds are prime artifacts of feminist confusion.'

Such problems are perhaps only to be expected in a Hollywood framework whose invitations for identification are largely predicated on the necessity of describing the late 1910s in terms of the late 1960s (and afterwards). And the collapse of these periods into one another is no doubt responsible for the relatively short shrift paid to such matters as class difference: as important as this was in Reed's life and development, it finds few correspondences in the student revolts of the 60s, which were essentially a middleclass phenomenon. (The fact of Reed's upper-class and Harvard background clearly played a role in his charisma, but although Upton Sinclair once irritated him by referring to him as 'the playboy of the social revolution', closer study of his career reveals him to be anything but a dilettante. In 'A Taste of Justice' [1913], a brief but powerful story included in the collection Adventures of a Young Man, he describes with shocking candour the privilege he enjoys as a celebrity in relation to a prostitute facing a charge in a Manhattan night court.)

ON THE **IMPORTANCE OF JOHN REED**

'As soon as the winter of the armoury show was over Mabel Dodge came back to Europe and brought with her what Jacques Emile-Blanche called her collection des jeunes gens assortis, a mixed assortment of young men. In the lot were Carl Van Vechten, Robert Jones and John Reed ... I remember the evening they all came. Picasso was there too. He looked at John Reed critically and said, le genre de Braque mais beaucoup moins rigolo, Braque's kind but much less diverting. I remember also that Reed told me about his trip through Spain. He told me he had seen many strange sights there, that he had seen witches chased through the streets of Salamanca. As I had been spending months in Spain and he only weeks I neither liked his stories nor believed them.'

Gertrude Stein, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas

'Reed was a westerner and words meant what they said.

The war was a blast that blew out all

the Diogenes lanterns; the good men began to gang up to

call for machine guns. Jack Reed was the last of the great race of war correspondents who ducked under censorships and risked their skins for a story.

Jack Reed was the best American writer of his time, if anybody wanted to know about the war they could have read about it in the articles he wrote about the German front.



Diane Keaton and Warren Beatty.

the Serbian retreat, Saloniki; behind the lines in the tottering empire of the Czar, dodging the secret police, jail in Cholm.' John Dos Passos, 'Playboy' (in 1919)

'As I look back on it all, it seems to me that the most important thing to know about the war is how the different peoples live; their environment, tradition, and the revealing things they do and say. In time of peace, many human qualities are covered up which come to the surface in a sharp crisis; but on the other hand, much of personal and racial quality is submerged in time of great public stress. And in this book [illustrator Boardman] Robinson and I have simply tried to give our impressions of human beings as we found them.' John Reed, The War in Eastern Europe (1916)

Considering how far John Reed actively sought to become a legend during his own lifetime, it hardly seems surprising that so many accounts of him-including the first two cited above, written at almost precisely the same time half a century ago, in 1932—differ so strikingly. As the first of the novelistic journalistsa breed of macho adventurer that would later include Hemingway and Mailer (both, as it happens, third-rate poets like Reed when it came to affecting Kiplingstyle doggerel) as well as Orwell-Reed still serves to embody the active, committed reporter in opposition to the armchair analyst. If memory serves, it is just this image that informs Paul Leduc's Mexican film Reed: México Insurgente (1969), shot documentary-style in sepia. which concludes with a freeze frame of Reed breaking a shop window to steal a camera; it is certainly the spirit that underlies Reed's own Ten Days That Shook the World.

By insisting throughout on the fusion of the personal with the political, Reds

postulates as a fundamental aspect of its seductive and enormously attractive appeal that spectators perform something of the same synthesis, within the terms of their own psychological, sexual and political chemistries-forging their own personal links and private bridges between the recent 60s and the remote 1910s, with the elderly witnesses officiating like partial and informal guides in these subtle and delicate transactions. As suggested above, Beatty's singular stroke of brilliance in using these mediators is to create a form of dialectics, a kind of dialectical play of historical analysis which to a limited (if invaluable) degree authenticates and objectifies two otherwise debatable positions: the forgetful personal account and the nostalgic Hollywood myth. Thus two forms of sentimentality and unreliability complement and challenge one another, across a canvas comprising five years and six locations (less than a sixth of Reed's life), in the separate titled panels of the movie: Portland, 1915; Croton-on-Hudson, 1916; Paris, 1917; New York, 1918; Chicago, 1919; Petrograd, 1920. From their conjunction and juxtaposition comes a certain kind of honesty, a modest yet workable access to truth.

The occasional use of overlapping voices on the soundtrack (mainly Beatty's or Keaton's) serves to remind one how much of the film's narrative structure and use of incidental detail is based on principles of overlap between documentary and fiction, between sex or art and politics. The period song 'I Don't Want to Play in Your Yard'—as relevant to personal borders as one wants to make it—is first sung by a male witness, then taken up by the orchestra on the soundtrack before being resumed by Louise, singing it to O'Neill and others in Provincetown (in Jack's absence, shortly after her affair with Eugene has begun), where it takes on a decidedly sexual resonance. Conversely, the performance

of the 'Internationale' by a Russian chorus just before the film's intermission, when Reed and Bryant's encounter with the Russian Revolution is unmistakably linked to their orgasmic sexual reunion in Petrograd, is followed, just after the interval, by one of the female witnesses singing the same song in English.

By the same token, two emblematic objects spanning separate scenes are O'Neill's unopened love letter to Bryant, pressed between pages of Leaves of Grass, and Reed's unfinished poem on the back of an IWW flyer-each reflecting the untidy, giddy overlays of energetic, incomplete lives caught up in external events. Many of the masterful early scenes seem constructed around comparable notions of superimposed layers involving sound and image: Emma Goldman (superbly played by Maureen Stapleton) introduced from Louise's viewpoint as a chattering offscreen voice entering Reed's Village flat; an argument in the same place on a rainy afternoon (all mottled patterns and flickering shadows in Vittorio Storaro's beautifully textured tones); a skilful evocation of a Bohemian community in Provincetown executed in simple, consecutive strokes effectively blended together, like some of the atmospheric mixes of vacation-time impressions that open Sunrise. A montage of Greenwich Village social gatherings at which Louise comically strives to establish her own credentials directly evokes, for that matter, the speeded-up account of Charles Foster Kane's first marriage, with its own use of overlapping breakfasts. But if Kane is recalled at many junctures throughout Reds, it is worth noting the political difference that Kane views journalism more from the vantage point of management than from that of labour.

If Reds reaches a political conclusion of any sort, this may be the recognition that certain events, like certain lives, invariably get lost in (or devoured by) history, but collective struggle and romantic love are not necessarily strange bedfellows. One of the more striking rhyme effects has Reed angrily declaring, 'You don't rewrite what I write'-initially to a New York editor (Gene Hackman), later to Kosinski's Zinoviev. And the climactic framing rhyme of Jack proposing to Louise that they go to New York together-first from Portland in 1915, shortly after they've met; then from Petrograd in 1920—raises the question each time of what they are to go as. Lovers or comrades? The film's efforts to collapse these categories into one are as idealistic and courageous, in a way, as Reed and Bryant were themselves, as touching and as serious and as foolhardy.

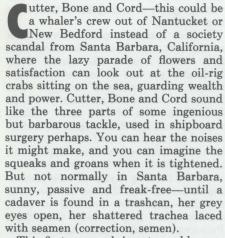
As the witnesses once again take over the narrative reins, continuing behind the final credits, a synthesis of old and new commentaries paradoxically leaves us with the same doubts and yet with firmer commitments, stronger beliefs. 'I've forgotten all about it. Were there socialists?' '... I don't remember his exact words, but the meaning was that great things are ahead, worth living and worth dying for. He himself said that.'

DAVID THOMSON

THE DEATHS IN SANTA BARBARA



Lisa Eichhorn (Mo), John Heard (Cutter), Jeff Bridges (Bone).



This first approach is not so odd, even if it seems dreamy. Cutter's Way, as it is now called, is an American reverie in which we need to feel out the smothered depths beneath the warm, bright but specious surfaces of Santa Barbara. People will die in this easeful setting. It cannot save or deter them. The film was once called Cutter and Bone, like the novel it comes from; the muffled affinities in that trio of cold names is a sinister melody of the film alone. In Newton Thornburg's novel the never captured and possibly man-eating tycoon is named Wolfe, not Cord. So listen to the names first. There's more magic in the old coupling than in this foolish new premise of one man's way out of the problem.

utter and Bone opened in America in March 1981. 'Opened' is not quite the word. When United Artists released it, they already had a withdrawal date pencilled in. Although the picture was a labour of love, it had no one in the distributing company tied to the mast. After all, it cost a mere \$3 million, and today that is a subversive budget. It has to be misguided and un-American, otherwise someone might discover that no film need cost more than \$3 million.

The picture was driven forward by a first-time producer, Paul Gurian. He bought the novel and hired Jeffrey Alan Fiskin to do the screenplay. Robert Mulligan was set to direct it for EMI, with Dustin Hoffman as Cutter and John Heard as Bone. But Hoffman couldn't schedule it, and so Mulligan lost interest. EMI put it in turnaround. Mark Rydell came and went as a possible director. Then David Field rescued it for United Artists, and Ivan Passer was recruited as director. According to the righteous fallacies of the film business, UA were then excited by the dailies of Heaven's Gate, and so they said they would make Cutter and Bone if Jeff Bridges would consent to star in it. Arguably, it is the intermit-tent lure of stardom that has done most



Bone's unsound car stops at lights and a file

to becalm Jeff Bridges' career, and *Heaven's Gate* was no chart to treasure. Still, this scheme had the virtue of moving John Heard from Bone to Cutter.

The movie was shot, with Lisa Eichhorn as the female lead. But by the time it opened, David Field had left UA, Heaven's Gate was an abyss in that company's soul and Cutter and Bone was written off as depressing. There were no test previews, an advertising budget of only \$65,000 and an early attack from Vincent Canby in the New York Times. Without defenders at UA, the film was pulled on a tide of rising business and friendly reviews in the weeklies. No large distributor knows or cares how to handle small, difficult pictures. But the movie was passed on to UA Classics, an offshoot, and they re-released it. It is the same film, except for that casual and depleting title change. As 1981 unfolded, the picture slowly found an audience and recognition at several festivals. It remains a blot on movie criticism that many American reviewers omitted it from their ten best lists in favour of such things as Raiders of the Lost Ark, Body Heat and My Dinner with André, novelties for those disposed to watch a meal in which the participants do not eat their food, let alone one another.

Alexander Cutter and Richard Bone are not intellectual acquaintances. They are



of white horses pass in front of him.'

locked in failure and blame, the separated pieces of a myth. They are as attached as the hook and a fish's mouth, like a stump and its prosthesis, a vengeful scar and a golden body with nowhere to go. Once these two cross eyes, they cannot exist without the perilous contrariness they represent for each other. The cripple's bitterness washes over the stud's smooth body: the sado-masochistic mutuality is so vibrant in word and glance that the film doesn't need to wonder about gay possibility. Emotional need outstrips sex in Cutter and Bone. The parts may fit together, but without pleasure or release. Their great escape is in trying to dodge that merciless fit.

The movie never explains how the two men met or why they tolerate their own hostility. Cutter curses Bone's cowardice and Bone retaliates with slack, supine health. Cutter is as impaired as Bone is whole—yet that sentence sounds unsure, because the names tell us how cruelly the damaged part of the organism launches itself at the supposedly intact member. Minus a leg, an arm and an eye, Cutter is all raw, razory edges. Richard Bone is Jeff Bridges, a star, a sweetcorn body, feebly submissive to his own appeal to women. But his name is as bare as a skeleton. Remember the Hollywood caprice that had John Heard switch roles and you may appreciate the interchangeability latent in these two opposites. They are as antagonistic but as dependent as Othello and Iago, two men who grapple to forget and damn a woman.

Bone is a gigolo. He markets boats some of the time, but that is only bait for the wives of wealthy Santa Barbarans who are thinking of cruising the bay. We see him first looking in the mirror, in a room at the El Encanto* hotel. He is trimming his moustache with a lady's electric razor, while the lady (Nina Van Pallandt) is sitting up in bed, in the mirror, watching him, rid of recent lust. It is her one scene, and she represents the succession of women in Bone's life. Van Pallandt is like an old ship now, beautiful but barnacled with associations: the treachery of The Long Goodbye (the visual slipperiness of which can be felt here); as unlocatable as a Kensington accent and a German name; sweet folk-singer and companion to a fraud; the gracious pimp from American Gigolo. The sex finished off with a borrowed razor has not been good. This is a movie so loaded with disappointment, it must hold itself steady to prevent spills. Through the mirror they criticise one another, and when Bone says he has to visit a sick friend, she finds him twenty dollars and suggests that he buy some

*The El Encanto is not named in the book. It must be one of Melville's Encantadar, or Enchanted Isles, 'looking much as the world might after a penal conflagration'.

Vitamin E. 'It's been better for me, too,' he sighs, insolent but abashed. Then he's gone, avoiding the car valet's tip with the excuse that he's got bad engine noise.

It's a nasty opening full of mean vanity and unashamed cheating, with the male star presented to us as a sleazy conniver. More than one viewing shows how much suggestion the film wants us to absorb. Every object or person is different from another angle: movement has to push aside aspic disquiet, and stale air quivers with unspoken hurts. Van Pallandt's woman belongs to the flawed upper class that the film's outsiders hunt all the way from the marina to the mansion on the hill. We feel sure that, somehow, she knows J. J. Cord, and her bland contemptuousness helps characterise him before he has appeared. Even though Bone walks out on her, smirking with the brief reassurance of floating sex and a dismissive twenty, she is his superior. She knows more. She disdains the boat he showed her earlier in the day, possibly the boat he lives in when Cutter is too hurtful, and where he will be when the worst news finds him. Very subtly, the class system and her role as a potential customer who purchases his toy body allows us to feel that the boat may be under surveillance. The woman does not know Cutter, but her intuition that Bone needs Vitamin E more than his alleged friend might, is one among many clues that Cutter and Bone are the same person.

Outside the El Encanto it is dark. Bone's unsound car stops at lights and a file of white horses pass in front of him: is this a circus leaving town, or dolphins skipping across the prow at night? If only the film had fewer white horses, we might be more moved by this unexpected omen and epiphany. Bone drives on but his car quits in film noir alley: there's a steady rain falling and the Jack Nitzsche music swells with pressure when another car stops some way behind. A figure gets out of the car; there is movement, blurred in the streaming night. Bone expects this car to come to his aid. Instead it drives off, fast and brutal, almost knocking him aside. Purged of thoughts of charity, Bone trudges through the rain. But the camera lingers to notice high heels and legs jutting out of a trashcan where the other car paused.

Bone makes his way to a bar where Cutter greets him with an 'Ishmael returns' and hoarse, rattling jive about Moby Dick, an unspecified malaise they share. John Heard's Cutter is unmanageable and bristling; it is as if an Ahab (and a Long John Silver) lurched through a book written without the poetic storminess of Melville's style. This is a mad, marooned Ahab, drunk and vicious in a home for old seamen. But it is part of the film's suggestiveness that Cutter should seem to hear and be carried along by such growling winds, while Bone is an unwholesome piece of perfection, fastidiously prodded by a morbid, Joan Didionlike pen.

Cutter yearns after revelation or transcendent meaning, while Bone would

sooner slip away from its demands. Cutter sneers at Bone's habit of walking away, but Cutter will hobble along in quest of a great idea because it helps him avoid the challenge of facing his ordinary pain. Cutter has been devastated in Vietnam, but the film uses that historical trauma as little as possible. Where Thornburg's novel attempts a portrait of recent American disenchantments, the movie (like Cutter) aspires towards the level of myth and mystery. Its storyline seems to threaten one more reworking of American paranoia, the frail individual and the implacable force of big business. But Cutter is actually larger than his quarry. The thriller routine does not dump its energy on American blight-Vietnam, the sourness after the 60s, and the deceitful grace of Santa Barbara. Instead, the puzzle stands for an obsession that may beckon men out of their everyday dismay and the 'damp, drizzly November' of the soul. The mystery is not solved, but the stealthy spread of its possibility brings Cutter and Bone together, knitting up their broken parts.

Cutter is one of the screen's most disconcerting wounded. Well into the film, he undresses, preparing to go to bed with his wife, Mo. The eyepatch never comes off; it is a pirate's flag for swaggering past lost vision. But we see the livid stump of arm and the artificial leg. This is all glimpsed so naturally, and on the edge of so poignant a wasteland, the marriage bed, that we never notice trickery. And Heard's performance is so thoroughly physical that we feel the muscular exaggeration that has compensated for his lopsidedness. He makes every other movie invalid seem flabby and indolent. His voice, somewhere between a roar and a choke, bespeaks half a body; and what he says, tormented raillery and goading masquerade, is the language of tortured endurance. It is like the white seam-fissure but strength-that ran down Ahab's face. And as with Ahab, we are not quite sure 'whether that mark was born with him, or whether it was the scar left by some desperate wound.'

There are people as full of brilliant self-loathing who have never been to war or undergone amputation. Bone's incompleteness—to be so attractive but so undependable-has no kind of provenance. He and Cutter offend, aggravate and attract one another. Bone is the beach god Cutter can never be; he has also seen the sight that might fulfil a wasted life. Cutter has the one woman who touches Bone as a person, Mo, and he has the spiritual need to follow the story Bone would like to drop. The three people share much, but helplessly, like inmates of a prison. The two men have to suffer the sight of Mo sinking further into drugs, booze and despair. Mo sleeps with Cutter, but nothing happens. She loves Bone, but she mocks him, for she guesses that the gift of herself would strike him as just a conquest. So she abides by an impotent husband and an impossible love; you can see the skull emerging in her waxen face. Eventually, the men conceive an unspoken bargain: Cutter takes over the quest that is too



Jeff Bridges (Bone) in film noir alley, scene of the dumping of a corpse in a trashcan.

much for his companion, and Bone goes home to Mo.

No one in the film says Cutter is impotent, though in the novel he and Mo had a year-old child who played with his mother's hair when she at last made love with Bone. But Cutter's nullity is borne out by hints in the film, and by Mo's cold comment that they make no noise in the night. When Bone first comes home and finds Mo alone, but awake, drifting to the icebox in search of vodka and looking like a ghost in her silk kimono, their sniping talk is that of denied love. But there is a moment when she reaches out her hand and the foolish lover-boy thinks she wants him. 'The bottle,' she snarls, sighing with ruinous contentment when it smacks into her palm.

It is a stagnant enclave, this gloomy household, more dank and painful than an American picture has risked in years. The pessimism is reminiscent of Nicholas Ray, but there is none of Ray's energy. Death has already occurred: it just waits for an identifying crisis. Mo's eyes measure the mood, listless with lost hopes, but emotionally caustic despite every narcotic. Her veiled eyes can clear with the crazy impulse of buying fresh food. Out-of-doors, alone in her own haze, she can still feel the rapture of sun and air. You can see United Artists flinching from so bleak a woman, and we worry for the magnificent Lisa Eichhorn's readiness to appear so maudlin and so intelligent. Who will cast her again? She leaves us anguished at the sight of life ebbing out of a body and at our inability to do anything about it.

For even if Mo is the film's emotional touchstone, she is dispensed with. Bone may have glimpsed the killer in the alley clearly enough to know it was J. J. Cord,

oil tycoon. A day later, when he sees Cord riding a white horse in a Santa Barbara parade, Bone's carelessness blurts out, 'That's him.' Cutter hears and will not let it go. An uneasy trio—Cutter, Bone and the sister of the murdered girl—set about approaching Cord, threatening him with exposure ... or extortion. It is a measure of their confusion of moral crusade and oppressed greed that they are not certain which motive prompts them.

Bone is the least dedicated to any plan. As the alleyway witness, he is sent into the Cord building—as high and awesome as Moby Dick's spout-but he only pretends to deliver the message to Cord. Cutter takes over from him. You can argue that it is because his life is most amputated that he wants the crime to be placed at Cord's feet. The largeness of the killer could fill his life with excitement, plunder and worship. But Cutter's imagination also comprehends the murder in terms of sexual humiliation. In one furious outburst, he explains to Bone how the killing might have occurred—the aging Cord and a teenage whore, she blowing him and then mocking his puniness until impotence beat on her and killed her. The movie does not reach this far, but amid the many cross-currents it is enough for us to sense the passion of murderousness in Cutter's insight. In projecting the story, he shares his distress with Cord.

Cutter needs Cord as much as Bone wants Mo. Criss-cross. As we leave the cripple to assail the corporate tower, Bone wanders home in the middle of the day. He finds Mo half-asleep, half-dressed, in the garden. He watches her for a precious moment. He is, after all, a man who sees and longs to act on the



sight. They spend the day together, and as darkness falls—the world picking up the hue of her eyes—they do make love. It is very tenderly treated: he is a boy and she is sick. We see her crying and then asking Bone to stay for the duration of the night. He promises.

No one any longer expects him to stay, but Mo's hope has been rekindled: it burns as quietly as the gas fire in the living room. She is curled up on the couch as Bone shyly slips his loving arm from beneath her. Outside a car passes by-just a sound on the track, and lights drawn across the window, a memory of a car in an alley. There is a close-up of the fire: Mo's embers. Then as Bone leaves, another passing car, and a shot of Mo's eyes opening like gas taps. In the course of their love she had said, 'In the middle of the night, I have to go look and see if I'm still there. I wonder if I ever really cared or if all I do is pretend.' She is the only person in the film who can make a calm, lucid confession, and it is the last hopeful signal she will fly. Caring is killed as Bone goes out of the door: it is the gravest death in Santa Barbara and the one crime we see.

Does Mo take her own life, or did Cord incinerate the house as a warning to Cutter? The novel only flirts with the doubt—we know that Mo would not have let her child die, and he too perishes in the book's fire. But in the movie, the dilemma is posed with unerring cinematic skill. Morning is a camera sliding along the waterfront, through grey mist, across white hulls. The movement is an approaching dread, but is it Cord or the shocking news? Then we cut to the black skeleton of the house, nothing left but charred structure and the burning pages of a book.

The novel collapses in its last hundred pages, picking on Cord as the killer who orders Bone's death while Cutter ends in a mental hospital, like Bartleby in the Tombs. The film has invented a very different narrative ambiguity. Hope is the only thing that can sustain the broken lives of Cutter and Bone. They have an instant of reunion. When they challenge Cord in his own airy home, Cutter rides a white horse into the mogul's living room. As he bleeds to death, Bone assures his friend that the dream was true. He then looks at Cord, a man who only moments earlier did not know Cutter from Bone, so slight is his knowledge so vast his intuition, and says 'It was you?' It is a line uttered out of dread and hope. 'What if it were?' answers Cord-you will know the great white whale by his punctilious grammar. He puts on the dark glasses that mimic Cutter's patch. They reflect and taunt pursuit. Bone picks up Cutter's only arm and the gun it holds to shoot-at Cord, perhaps, but at the film itself, at his guilt and the memory of Mo.

It is an act of obliteration, an ending but not really a resolution. Remarkable as Cutter and Bone is, this explosion and its swift fade are a slick way of getting off. We have to suppose that Bone has discovered some last bravery to vindicate Cutter's adventure, that Cord has pulled their two parts together, hand in hand, wrapped round a gun. But this tidy clasp is a long way from the destruction of all the Pequod's crew, with Ishmael left adrift. The flourish of action does no credit to Mo's relinquishing of life. With her gone, the two men should talk more freely and revealingly: Cutter's tirade should slip away, for it was the frenzy he had cultivated to cloak failure, and Bone should face his own abjectness. But John Heard is on the wing with his huge act, not good enough to retract or tire, and Jeff Bridges never goes deep enough into the cold water of being unlikeable. Both actors turn boyish, and the script rescues them with action enough to take their minds off the burned-out eyes of Lisa Eichhorn. The film dies with her, escaping into conventional and threadbare heroics.

lutter and Bone is made by thoughtful, sensitive people—Passer, Fiskin, Jordan Cronenweth the photographer, Jack Nitzsche the composer, as well as the cast. There are countless felicities of visual and aural atmosphere: the background to the credits with a parade advancing on the camera, sepia bleeding into the colour, fancy transforming the matter-of-fact; the colour scheme of the movie, with a mordant lilac linking the socks on the trashean corpse, Mo's shirt and Cutter's jacket; the forlorn disarray of the house with jungle wallpaper in the bedroom and a more impenetrable forest of neglect everywhere else; and that instant when the camera holds on black sea and oil-rigs, nodding towards the power in Santa Barbara.

But Passer's style is careful, gentle and reticent: he accumulates little touches here and there, just like a paranoid putting the case together. Moreover, while it is sensible to confine the action to Santa Barbara, and to make Cord the boss of the city, that compression of space and order is all the more sinister. Much of the film's momentum and nearly all its spatial uneasiness enhance the chance of the Cord noose being real. While tempting, I think that's a mistake, and one the movie seems to recognise if we can judge by its decision to abandon the novel's climax. Apart from a few stylised moments-the alley, the brief views of an inhuman Los Angeles, and the oiled flatness of the sea-Santa Barbara is too ordinary. Passer has settled for making us believe in the story and share in its despondency. Whereas, it is the central human relationships-maimed, blind, perverse and nihilistic-that are most original. These characters should be more adrift from their world, more at sea, if you think of Melville's working of the myth.

The strangeness of Cutter and the wretchedness of Bone are applied, like the series of white horses. Heard finds a style, but Bridges tends to look sheepish. There is rarely a feeling of the compulsive loneliness in these two that has overpowered their ability to see the world. They seem like actors pretending to be carried away. Cutter is too lurid an eccentric, playing up to everyone's weary expectations of him, never alone. The subdued, watchful and depressed style needs more of Melville's tempest-that is what redeems Ahab from tyrannical ambition. When Melville describes the sea, the real flows into the epic. But the movie's respect for conspiracy is as furtive and meticulous as a police spy's report. They Might Be Giants, despite too much whimsy, believed enough in its

central character's saintly dementia to see his world differently.

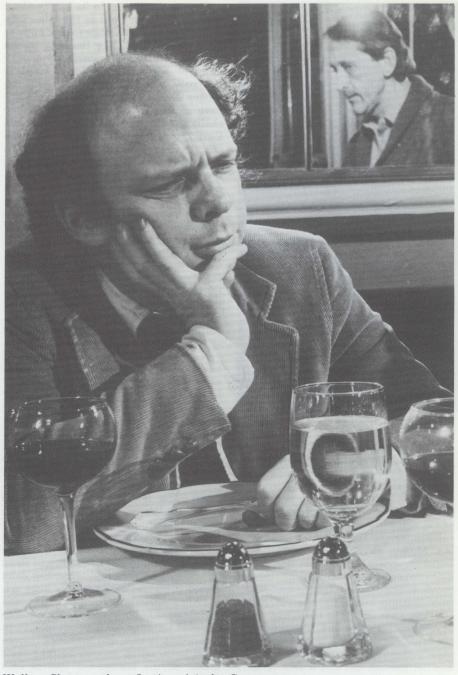
It seems churlish to say that the wonderful Cutter and Bone is not quite good enough. But if a film evokes Melville, and sends you back to Moby Dick, then it has to face the comparison. This is Ivan Passer's best American picture, as sensitive as a windvane, with passages of domestic horror and dying beauty, most of them involving Lisa Eichhorn. But it is too crushed, too daunted. In the end, its limits illustrate a caution in American movies today. How far, I wonder, does Passer's innate foreboding derive from his need to adjust to the vagaries of stupid, powerful film companies? Time and again, the American thriller is a retelling of the tormented relations between the artists and their business. That's one reason why Cutter and Bone are not sure whether they want to expose Cord's empire or live off it. And if this shadow has helped intimidate some American movie-makers, then perhaps it, has made their characters anxious and controlled. In the end, the imaginative obsession in Cutter and Bone is not bold enough. The fatal pact of that first title, its clash of love and torture, is greater than the film itself. It is very hard to make a picture on a modest scale, but it is harder still to find the majestic strangeness it deserves.

Some notes on Louis Malle and

MY DINNER WITH ANDRÉ

WALLACE SHAWN, the New York playwright and bit-part actor, details the transformation of himself and his friend André Gregory, the stage director, into 'characters' in a film by Louis Malle. My Dinner with André, co-scripted by Shawn and Gregory, and produced by Michael White, will open shortly in London, having done surprise runaway business in the United States.

Very few critics have known what to say about Louis Malle's contribution to the film My Dinner with André, and in a way it's a great compliment to Malle that people seem to assume that the film wasn't really directed, just as in a way André Gregory and I feel complimented when we realise that people don't think it was written or acted either. All the same, it happens to be true that My Dinner with André represents one of the more remarkable feats in the recent history of film directing. Working with two unknown actors—one of whom had appeared in a few small film roles, the other of whom had never been in a film in his life-Malle managed to amuse, entertain, involve and even one might say fascinate an audience (or a large proportion of an audience) with a story that can accurately be summarised as follows: Part One (about seven minutes): a New York playwright travels by subway



Wallace Shawn and a reflection of André Gregory.

to meet a theatre director for dinner at a restaurant; Part Two (about one hour and thirty-seven minutes): the playwright and the director talk over dinner; Part Three (about three minutes): the playwright rides home in a taxi.

The principal filming techniques employed by Malle could be summed up as: choosing the camera angles and, in collaboration with the editor Suzanne Baron, selecting the appropriate takes and the appropriate moment to cut from one take to another. There were no bizarre camera positions, virtually no camera movements, and no shots of the waiters or the other diners in the restaurant after the moment when the characters take their seats at their table. Scrupulously avoiding all opportunities to draw anyone's attention to his own brilliance or virtuosity, Malle managed, through the perfection of his choices, to create a film which has been an important experience for an amazingly varied group of people, including many whose lives, at least on the surface, would seem to have nothing to do with the lives of the characters.

How did Malle manage to hypnotise his audience and pull them along with him through the entire length of the film? It had something to do with his use of tempo and rhythm. Also it had something to do with a warm feeling he had for both the characters. By studying the piece in detail, one might be able to see what he did. But rather than analysing the film itself or speculating on the reasons why Malle might have made all the decisions he made, I will concentrate here on just describing a few of the features of his work as I observed them during the course of my own involvement with the film. First, though, I'll say a word about how this particular script happened to be written at all.





Top: A prelude to conversation; below: Louis Malle (left) and the talkers.

I had been writing plays for about six years when, in 1971, I met André Gregory, the theatre director. At that time no one in the professional theatre had taken me seriously, so I was particularly excited when Gregory showed a great enthusiasm for my scripts. In 1972 I wrote a play for Gregory's company, the Manhattan Project. The play was performed in the winter of 1975, and by the summer of that year Gregory was on his way out of the theatre, following some experiences in a forest in Poland which are partially recounted in our film. Over the next few years, Gregory and I saw each other every now and then and caught up on each other's activities. And then finally in 1978, when Gregory was ready to return to work in the theatre, we tried to think of something we could do together. After a few false starts, I came up with the idea that André and I should do a talking heads film, based on

ourselves. In December 1978 we began meeting two or three times a week to talk on tape—talking almost at random about everything and anything, including the subject of what sort of film ours might be and what sort of material might be included in it.

In February 1979, I sat down with the tapes and transcripts of our endless conversations and tried to see if anything was in them. Apparently there was only an endless swamp of boring and meaningless junk. But after a few months of study, of sifting through and cataloguing the material, sentence by sentence, in a sort of confused and miserable way, certain themes began to emerge; somewhere inside several layers of wrapping, there were certain subjects, certain concerns. Also, two fictional characters, distinct and amusing, seemed to be vaguely visible underneath the incomprehensible surface of the actual people we were.

When the idea of the dinner suddenly occurred to me, and a certain structure began to suggest itself, all the thousands of sentences which I had carefully isolated and which lay around my room in various tiny heaps seemed to leap from their places by their own accord and pour themselves like little rivulets into certain major channels. Some long, strange monologues began to appear, made up of lines and phrases culled from dozens of different meetings. Then monologue began to answer monologue, line to answer line, and the whole thing sort of flowed together into a complete story.

A few days after the script was finished, André and I had lunch (we'd never had dinner together, but occasionally we had lunch) at a Japanese restaurant, and we began to discuss all the world's great directors. We were feeling very high about it all at that moment, so there were many great names tossed around and finally rejected. We needed a director with a great sense of humour on the one hand and a great sense of drama on the other-a master storyteller who would be able to bring out whatever qualities of suspense and tension our script might contain. We needed someone who would care about the issues raised in the script but who would not totally identify with either one or the other of the characters. or, for that matter, despise either one or the other of the characters. We wanted someone who would know how to satirise us both-who would see us clearly as men who had grown up with privilege and money, two lazy dilettantes philosophising over a meal while the world outside was toiling and suffering-and yet who could also portray us with the human sympathy that would be necessary in order to interest an audience in our fate.

We obviously needed one of the world's great directors—we knew that in any other hands one could only expect our script to fall totally flat-and yet we wanted to find a director who was not a complete egomaniac, because we hated to think that we ourselves would be forced out of any involvement in our own project. Finally, we wanted someone who we knew would not get nervous at the last moment and start throwing in flashbacks, strange comical diversions in the restaurant, fights in the kitchen and things like that. By the end of the lunch, we'd decided to send our script at once to Louis Malle.

André and I had each met Louis casually a couple of times, but we didn't really know him. We sent him the script through a mutual friend. He read it overnight and called André in the morning, and we all met later that day. It was obvious that the script had affected him deeply. He agreed to direct it, and André and I set to work learning our lines. In the early spring we all started working together. (The script at that time was almost three hours long.) At an early rehearsal, we went through the entire thing from beginning to end without stopping, and when we were finished we looked over at Louis, and he had this sort of panicky smile on his face, and he said, 'You know, this might be unbearable.' But the chance that it might be a total disaster was part of the fun for him.

From early on, Louis encouraged us to treat the script as if we'd received it in the mail, to forget the fact that we knew how the real André and Wally would say the lines. In other words, André and I instinctively started off trying to be just like ourselves, and Louis immediately realised that if we kept on doing that, it would be much better to hire two actors to play us, because any good actor would attempt to interpret his character, to show what was going on beneath his character's façade, while we were merely reproducing the façade.

As the script had been written with this very point in mind-that the characters would be saying one thing, while the camera would show their faces registering many other things at the very same time-we readily agreed with Louis' suggestions. All the same, it took a while to get used to them, because we kept on thinking all the time, 'But I'm the expert here! How can he tell me how to play this part?' Eventually we came to terms emotionally with what we had known intellectually from the beginning: the audience wanted to see two interesting, believable characters in an interesting and believable movie, and whether or not those two characters resembled the historical Wally and André or not was a matter of total indifference to them. This was not a documentary about André and me, not our biography or memorial; it was not even about André and me; it was a piece of fiction, a movie. We had always known that.

One of the biggest differences between the characters Louis developed and the real Wally and André was that in life André and I both speak fairly slowly, and in my case almost painfully slowly. Louis immediately wanted to speed us up. At first it seemed grotesquely unnatural to me. Then it became very natural, because I adjusted to playing this character, 'Wally', who had these dynamic, nervous, headlong speech patterns. In order for the characters to make sense at this new speed, André and I both just learned to think very fast, in a way to be more intelligent than we really are.

What was even odder was that Louis wanted us to become quite heated and emotional in the course of our dinner, which of course in life we never would be. On all the hours and hours of tapes I'd listened to, there wasn't a moment when either of us ever raised his voice or spoke with any particular emotional colouration. When André spoke of being buried alive, he was utterly casual, and we both were laughing, just as we were when I discussed my feelings about Chinese fortune cookies. When we analysed the question of electric blankets, the discussion was amicable and pleasant-no bitterness or hostility was expressed at all. But Louis kept driving us to look at the subtext of our script like any normal actors. At first it seemed to me forced and theatrical to do what he wanted, but I eventually discovered that 'Wally' was much more expressive than I am myself, and then everything was fine.

During our rehearsals, we cut about an hour from the text. Louis would propose the cuts; I would be totally shocked and incredulous; then the three of us would talk-I suppose it must have driven Louis mad, but he seemed to accept itand somehow I would always see that he was right, that a certain passage was secretly redundant, except perhaps for a line or so, and somehow we would all figure out how to make the cut but not lose the line. Louis didn't really care how long the piece was. He just wanted to make sure that the train was moving ahead, so to speak, at a certain speed, from point A to point z all the way through, because there's always that danger that if the train seems to slow down or stop, the passengers may get off it and not get back on. People hate to think that they're seeing the same thing twice. Even the incorrect suspicion that they might be about to see the same thing twice seems to be somewhat enraging to people. Louis kept reminding us of

Usually we rehearsed at Louis' apartment, but once we rehearsed in a real restaurant, just to see what we'd learn. We went to The Ginger Man in New York and had dinner and did the piece, with Louis sitting silently next to us at the table. By the end of the dinner, André and I both had the impression that Louis wished he had never read our script or involved himself in our project. It was as if he was beginning to try to think of a plan of escape. And the truth was, we had a similar feeling ourselves: maybe the whole thing was just a bad idea, and it should just be dropped. It took quite a few days to recover, but eventually we all regained our faith in the project. Then we tried to analyse what had made that particular rehearsal so nauseating. One factor seemed particularly crucial. It was that every time either one of us took a bite of food during this rehearsal, it trivialised the things we were discussing. To eat during our own speeches created an impression that what we ourselves were saying was not very important to us, and to eat during the other person's speeches, conversely, made it look as if what the other person was saying was not very important.

Suddenly at The Ginger Man, neither André and I, on the one hand, nor Louis on the other, could really focus on what we were saying. And as we didn't seem to care about anything, our acting became incredibly bland and dull, and the piece as a whole seemed chaotic and awful. Occasionally we tried to inject a little liveliness into our acting, which made things worse. The ultimate consequence of this particular rehearsal was that Louis was alerted at an early stage to a problem he faced in directing the film. namely, how to create a realistic ambience, a real restaurant with food, without which the film would seem abstract and artificial, while at the same time not allowing that ambience to destroy the intense concentration on the conversation, without which the film would be

exhausting, demoralising and pointless.

During the summer we rehearsed on videotape, experimenting with different ways to do each bit. When all three of us would sit and watch what we had done, we invariably agreed about it all immediately.

During our rehearsals, Louis was amazingly direct and frank. In the theatre, particularly in the more far-out theatre, which was the world André and I had grown up in professionally, directors tend to manipulate the actors rather subtly by discussing the objectives of the characters or what's going on in the scene. They rarely criticise the actors' performances directly or outline in detail what they would like to see them do instead. Louis had no such inhibitions. It didn't bother him to say, after we'd knocked ourselves out for an hour, 'Well, that was a little bit dull, I thought.' He also felt no obligation to give easy or obviously logical suggestions. He would often say things like, 'Could you do it a bit faster, but a little more inward—but be a little bit less sentimental also,' and you would find that you knew exactly what he meant and could even do it.

When we finally came to shooting the film, we were surprised to discover another side of Louis-a sort of passionate warmth, a nurturing quality which he drew out of his sleeve at the last moment, just when we needed something new. We had rehearsed on and off for eight months, and as the final stage in our rehearsal process, just a few weeks before shooting, Louis encouraged us to perform the piece before a live audience, which we did at the Royal Court in London. We were very well prepared—we certainly knew our lines, and the experience on stage had burned the structure of the performances into our brains so that we could do any bit out of sequence and still know exactly where we were coming from emotionally, and where we were going. But there was a danger that perhaps we were stale, that our performances were now mechanical and unspontaneous. As Louis sat by the camera and watched us, his involvement in what we were doing was so strikingly intense that I almost felt he was inside our heads. There was a new feeling of intimacy to the way he worked, and it served somehow to inspire performances that were fresh and new.

After the shooting, Louis and Suzanne disappeared with the film, and my only role was as an occasional observer. When I looked at pieces they'd put together, I would have sworn myself that one single performance had been simultaneously recorded by about twelve cameras. Finally the music and effects were added, and the film opened. While not everyone liked it, and there were some people who hated it or found it intolerable, most people agreed that for what it was, it really did work. So if anyone thinks that later events can't influence earlier events, this story shows that that's just not so, because what Louis did in 1980 and 1981 made my weird idea in 1978 into a truly great idea and André's experiences in a Polish forest into a universal quest, a rite undergone for the sake of the tribe.

DOUBLE TAKES

Down under

Americans are even more insular than the British when it comes to foreign movies. A particular new wave in any foreign cinema has invariably crested and broken before it washes up as the latest fashionable thing on US shores. The Nouvelle Vague was not really seized upon until Jules et Jim; when Tom Jones had Americans clamouring for British films the rot had set in over here. Three years ago they couldn't give tickets away at the Manhattan cinema showing Newsfront (a far more intelligent radical movie than Ragtime or Reds) and Brendan Gill opined in the New Yorker that he couldn't imagine why anyone would pay to watch such unattractive people. Now the Australian cinema has broken through with Breaker Morant and, most forcefully, Gallipoli, both of which appeal to the current conservative mood of middle-class American moviegoers.

Australians, therefore, have every reason to be worried, especially with the further evidence of that other cultural indicator, the cover of Time. It used to be said that to be taken up by the Beaverbrook press was the kiss of death in Britain. By the same token to be featured on the cover of Time, especially for someone connected with the arts, meant that you had gone so far in the way of public acceptance as to be virtually passing out through the back door. In September 1967 Time put James Gould Cozzens on the cover, demanding that he be given the National Book Award, the Pulitzer, and the Nobel Prize, for By Love Possessed. Not only did he receive no award for that novel, but his reputation still hasn't recovered. The greatest trough in Ingmar Bergman's career occurred around 1960 when he had made Seventh Seal and Wild Strawberries and was edgily marking time

before embarking on the chamber trilogy. It was at this point that *Time* decided to mark him by making him the subject of a particularly sententious cover story.

Time's breathless cover story on the cinema Down Under was synopsised in the index thus: 'Australia's moviemakers have been winning critical acclaim abroad but seldom profits. Now Gallipoli heralds a new drive to win foreign earnings-without sacrificing art or quality.' The article itself mounts to a climax of two 'hardheaded Australian-born wheeler-dealers, who left the country to make their fortunes abroad' getting into the business of backing Gallipoli—they are of course 'Press Baron Murdoch Show Business entrepreneur Stigwood.

Gallipoli had a mixed reception in Britain. The popular press was excited, but the only truly enthusiastic welcome among the quality newspaper critics came from David Robinson in The Times. No one questions for a moment the probity of a critic of such standing. But The Times—like the Sunday Times, the Village Voice, New York and the New York Post-is owned by Rupert Murdoch, and we have another embarrassing case where one branch of a multinational conglomerate is faced with the task of appraising the product of another branch. It is happening increasingly, and great care is called for by critics under these circumstances. Critics should not of course feel compelled to damn the products of their masters in order simply to establish their independence. But to protect their own credibility and to demonstrate a responsibility to their readers, they should perhaps exercise a certain circumspection, especially when they admire a film.

David Robinson was unwise to write, and his editor (now former editor) Harold Evans should not have published, the final paragraph of the lengthy single review of *Gallipoli* (11 December 1981) that so warmly praised their employer's triumphant entry into the cinema: 'The entry of Messrs Robert Stigwood and Rupert Murdoch into films, with their R & R Productions, caused a great deal of apprehension and suspicion among the proponents of a policy of indigenous films, who felt that big business entrepreneurs like these must inevitably take the Hollywood trail. As it was, R & R, as their first production, finally provided financing for Peter Weir's long-cherished project. Gallipoli justifies the investment in commercial as well as artistic terms. In demonstrating the universal appeal of a national subject uncompromisingly treated, it may well also prove a decisive factor in determining the course of Australian films.'

Big effects

At a dinner at the Hyde Park Hotel just before Christmas last year, David Lean and Oswald Morris were made the first honorary fellows of the National Film School, whose tenth anniversary was being celebrated. Morris wasn't able to be there, and the celebrant reviewing the great cinematographer's career coupled the names of the two new fellows as fellow cameramen. He presumably confused Lean with his longtime friend. collaborator and now fellow director of anonymous international movies, Ronald Neame, who photographed In Which We Serve and Blithe Spirit. The embarrassment was compounded by the fact that sitting a couple of seats away from Lean was Roger Crittenden, assistant director of the National Film School, who had a few weeks before published an excellent manual on Film Editing (Thames and Hudson, £4.50) that fails to mention Lean or any of his pictures.

Lean, looking handsome, fit and twenty years younger than his 73 years,









In his last column Quincannon mentioned a new issue of Swedish stamps based on movie stills, and wondered what Britain might find to match them. A reader, Mr M. F. Pride of Woodford, takes up the challenge with this spirited quintet.



DOUBLE TAKES

laid great emphasis on his career as an editor in order to correct the record on behalf of his former craft, and then went on to tell a story that throws much light upon his later films. When he was embarking upon location hunting for Summer Madness in 1955, Lean was taken aside by Alexander Korda and warned against the artist's trap of searching out backwaters in obscure corners of Venice. That is for the little men interested in self-expression, Korda told him: 'Don't be shy of the obvious places, go for the big effects, don't be afraid of the Grand Canal or St Mark's.' One wonders how far that explains the future course of Lean's work-Bridge on the River Kwai, Lawrence of Arabia, Dr Zhivago, Ryan's Daughter, the Grand Canals and St Mark's of modern cinema.

Englishness

A name not mentioned in Humphrey Jennings: Film-Maker, Painter, Poet (BFI, £3.75), a valuable collection of essays and documents assembled by Mary-Lou Jennings to accompany an important exhibition at the Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, but one that keeps suggesting itself as one walks round the show, is that of George Orwell. Jennings and Orwell were united by a similar critical patriotism, a fascination with trying to define through specific images and general observations the nature of Englishness, a painful feeling for what the industrial revolution had done to Britain and a sadness over what a standardised mass culture was doing to it in the 1940s. Jennings' best wartime movies, Listen to Britain, Fires Were Started, A Diary for Timothy, are the cinematic equivalents of those long essays Orwell wrote at the time, most notably The Lion and the Unicorn and The English People.

In a new postscript to his 1954 SIGHT AND SOUND essay on Jennings, Lindsay Anderson worries about Jennings' politics, and his postwar loss of radicalism, but a few pages earlier Mary-Lou Jennings quotes a 1947 article by her father where he described his politics as 'those of William Cobbett'. Bernard Crick in his authorised biography of George Orwell remarks that 'the whiff of Cromwellian powder or dust from Cobbett's Rural Rides never seemed far from his nostrils.' Indeed, there are very close parallels in the careers of these two middle-class public schoolboys who came to have such an unaffected sympathy for, and to identify with, the working classes, each going north in the 1930s on a journey of selfdiscovery that produced for Orwell, The Road to Wigan Pier, and for Jennings,

They shared an enormous affection for East Anglia, and their paths might easily have crossed in the 1920s in Suffolk, for Orwell stayed with his parents at Southwold, just a mile or so up the coast from Jennings' home town of Walberswick,



William Sansom, author of 'Fireman Flower', on duty in 'Fires Were Started'.

when cramming for the India Office examination in 1922, and in 1929 he was tutoring backward boys in Walberswick itself on his return from Burma. Three years later Orwell took the name of a Suffolk river for his pseudonym. They were subsequently to have many mutual friends and almost certainly met during the war. Both died prematurely in 1950, Orwell in January at the age of 47, Jennings in September aged 43. The Festival of Britain the following year marked the watershed between their world of hopeful radicalism and the affluent, never-had-it-so-good society that followed. Each set particular store by his so-called creative work-Jennings' paintings, Orwell's fiction. But in both cases the real poetry is to be found in their documentaries, their reportage, their essays, Jennings' on the screen and Orwell's on the page.

Waugh work

Question: What have the following films in common? Fires Were Started, David Copperfield, La Nuit Américaine, Ragtime and Reds? Answer: They all feature distinguished novelists making rare (in most cases unique) appearances as actors: William Sansom (Fires Were Started), Hugh Walpole (David Copperfield), Graham Greene (La Nuit Américaine), Norman Mailer (Ragtime) and Jerzy Kosinski (Reds).

With Henry Green, Stephen Spender and others serving alongside William Sansom in the wartime fire service, Jennings could almost have cast *Fires Were Started* with literary celebrities, and in fact whenever I see his film and re-read Sansom's *Fireman Flower* or Green's

Caught, I am always reminded of that wicked scene on the first page of Officers and Gentlemen, the second volume of Evelyn Waugh's Sword of Honour trilogy. Guy Crouchback is in London during the Blitz, discussing with a friend whether the hellish night scene looks more like Turner than John Martin: 'They stood at the top of St James's Street. Half-way down Turtle's Club was burning briskly ... On the pavement opposite Turtle's a group of progressive novelists in firemen's uniform were squirting a little jet of water into the morning room.'

With Brideshead Revisited occupying so much television time lately, Waugh's view of British life in the 1930s and 40s has been more powerfully before the public than Jennings'. Both Waugh and Jennings spent the first postwar years thinking of feature films-Jennings with aborted plans for movie versions of H.E. Bates' The Purple Plain and Far from the Madding Crowd, Waugh going to Hollywood for the abandoned Brideshead. Waugh sold options on several books, but only one was filmed in his lifetime and he was perhaps fortunate to die without seeing Tony Richardson's The Loved One, which opened a week or two before his death. This travesty was co-scripted by Christopher Isherwood, who may well have been revenging himself for Waugh having pilloried him and Auden as the war-dodgers Parsnip and Pimpernel in Put Out More Flags.

There was, however, a half-hour television film version of the Waugh story that he later used for the final section of A Handful of Dust, starring Joseph Cotten as the lost explorer and Thomas Gomez as the crazy illiterate ruling over a private kingdom in the South American jungle who keeps him captive for the rest



Leslie Howard as the enigmatic English hero of 'Pimpernel Smith'.

of his life endlessly reading aloud a complete set of Dickens. The script was credited to Charles Jackson, author of *The Lost Weekend*, and the director given as Nicholas Ray. The BBC showed it one afternoon early in 1953 among randomly selected material used for testing purposes, and it does not appear in the usual reference books.

Pimpernels

It is generally believed that when Leslie Howard died in a civil aeroplane shot down over the Bay of Biscay in 1943, the Luftwaffe's real target was Winston Churchill, whom they erroneously thought to be the VIP aboard. In his recent memoir, In Search of My Father, Ronald Howard argues that the Nazis were after Leslie himself, because as a lecturer and film-maker he was 'Britain's most powerful and effective propagandist.' Certainly one can readily believe that the movie-conscious Josef Goebbels took such pictures as 49th Parallel, Pimpernel Smith and First of the Few very seriously.

The Germans were particularly incensed, so Ronald Howard tells us, about the frequent screenings of *Pimpernel Smith* in the private cinema of the British embassy in neutral Stockholm. It became such a cult movie among the Swedes (who of course could not see so politically tendentious a picture publicly) that the German ambassador made an official (and successful) protest to the Swedish foreign office.

There is now an important footnote to this story in a book published a few months after *In Search of My Father*— John Bierman's *Righteous Gentile*. This is the story of Raoul Wallenberg, the wealthy young Swede who, with breathtaking courage and ingenuity, rescued thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Gestapo before being arrested in Budapest by the Russian liberators. He disappeared into the Gulag Archipelago where, thirty-eight years later, he may still be. According to Bierman, Wallenberg attended one of the British embassy's private screenings of Pimpernel Smith in 1942 with his half-sister and was deeply moved: 'Wallenberg identified strongly with Howard's quiet, pipe-smoking Professor Smith, whom he physically resembled. "On the way home he told me that was just the kind of thing he would like to do," Nina Lagergren recalls. By an astonishing twist of fate, Wallenberg was to get his chance.'

We have a double irony here, for Leslie Howard, 'The Enigmatic Englishman' (as the National Film Theatre called its recent season of his films), was by origin a Hungarian Jew. He created a romantic propagandist fiction about rescuing middle-class intellectuals from the Nazi concentration camps that inspired an upper-class intellectual from a neutral country to emulate his hero's actions, only to finish up a captive in the prison camps of another totalitarian power.

No Gdansk

The young, it is said, are turning away from politics, and few more distressing pieces of evidence in support of this view are available than a couple of items that appeared in the TV film listings of the country's largest selling teenage paper, New Musical Express, at the height of the Polish crisis last January.

UP POMPEII (Bob Kellett 1971). Wajda's Man of Marble is on BBC-2, so sensible people will be getting stuck right into Frankie Howerd and friends. (BBC-1)

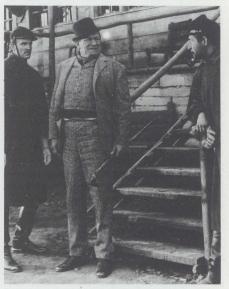
MAN OF IRON (Andrzej Wajda 1980). Cannes Grand Prix winner last year. No Gdansk, Andy! (BBC-2)

Can this be some kind of joke, is a satirist at work? Well, immediately before Man of Iron, a piece on The Cheap Detective concludes 'What a treat', and Michael Winner's Hannibal Brooks is hailed as 'not bad for an ex-NME writer'. One hopes that NME is not taken too seriously by public opinion analysts in the Kremlin.

Plugged

Last quarter I mentioned the 14th and final number of Sequence, edited in 1951 by Karel Reisz and Lindsay Anderson. It now turns out that the magazine had an illustrious Californian subscriber who wrote to the editors expressing his sorrow at the journal's demise because 'there is so little intelligent writing about films, so little that walks delicately but surely between the avant-garde type, which is largely a reflection of neuroticism, and the deadly commercial stuff.' This is from the exhilarating Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler, edited by Frank McShane. Chandler goes on to take Sequence to task for being 'a little too hard on English films' whose 'civilised' qualities he feels they've underrated, and before signing off ('with admiration and regret'), he adds: 'Even if you had been less intelligent, I should be sorry to see you go. SIGHT AND SOUND is all very well as far as it goes. I suppose it is subsidised and everything that is subsidised compromises, and everything that compromises ends up by being pretty negative.'

QUINCANNON



Quincannon (Victor McLaglen) retreats into civilian life in 'She Wore a Yellow Ribbon'. Our Quincannon signs off here; his successor takes over 'Double Takes' from the summer number.

At play in the fields of John Ford

Richard Combs makes the case for '7 Women' as Ford's last Western

'John Ford is still a "case" for film criticism' begins an article in Movie, No 22, which poses some questions about Ford's relation to the mythology of the Western. The proof of the statement is a matter of arithmetic. In the British Film Institute library index, references to articles on Ford take up eighteen cards, twelve of which have been filled since the appearance of his last film in 1966. It is amusing to think that film history is doing to Ford what Ford once did for American history—re-creating him. And each re-creation raises new problems of authenticity and verification for the one to follow. The shadow of those index cards falls across Fordian history as the distinctive outcroppings of Monument Valley now overshadow the history of the West.

Perhaps the essential Ford problem is that he was around so long. The director who began as a prop man and jack of all trades, and claimed to have ridden with the Klan for D. W. Griffith, had a career in movies that was almost conterminous with the movies themselves-and overlapped with one of their chief sources of mythology, the West. Ford had been a director for nearly twenty years before he brought both himself and the Western into focus with Stagecoach. But a decade later, after he had moved out West in earnest for My Darling Clementine and the cavalry trilogy, Monument Valley had become the image of 'his' West (as he would put his stamp on history as it was being lived, turning a company of film-makers into the Field Photographic Unit that was dubbed 'John Ford's Navy' in World War II). Added to which were such authoritative touches as Ford's claim to have got the story of the O.K. Corral from Wyatt Earp himself—could it be the last time a Hollywood Western boasted such an adviser?

Most authoritative, however, the sense of pastness in which Ford films are usually wrapped lent that image its own historical reverberations, as a sort of stand-in for the real thing. There is history also in the ageing of Ford's stock company of players (and a tradition of

service, that other great Ford theme, in Harry Carey being succeeded by his son). That the past, and mellowness, is all is amply demonstrated by the mere ten years that separate John Wayne's callow Ringo Kid in Stagecoach and his regretful, retiring Captain Nathan Brittles in She Wore a Yellow Ribbon. Ford's films-not just the Westerns, though that is where history is most concisely located—constantly refer to a past because it gives them something to celebrate and to mourn (one reason why The Sun Shines Bright, which does one or the other throughout, is his 'perfect' film). And not just a past, some other time, but some other place, be it America, a mystical Ireland, or somewhere even more exotic, unnameable, ideal. There are deep links between Ford's backwardlooking cinema and the dream mechanism of all cinema—which is perhaps what makes him such an interesting subject for constant reworking, such a 'case'.

Mere nostalgia, in the style of the 60s and 70s, is not the name of the game. Ford's historical dream exercises such a grip because he is able to realise, and people, it so vividly. The constant presence and progression of his company of actors/characters is the living proof that his ideal community can exist. In Andrew Sarris' phrase, 'What makes Ford's characters unique in the Western epic is their double image, alternating between closeups of emotional intimacy and long shots of epic involvement.' It is more than a double image, it is the crux of Ford as a case for film criticism: the contradiction between the immediacy and spontaneity with which he managed to live in his past, wherever it was located, and the formal apparatus that was required to bring it into being. An extension of the same problem is the way, with Ford's own ageing, formalism seemed to increase at the expense of spontaneity and warmth of characterisation.

The open-hearted humanism with which he portrayed various communities at the height of his career (through the 40s) has been equated with the health of the American Dream. Consequently, the



rather desiccated human values of his later films have been equated with that dream's withering. Ford, it has been assumed (by Robin Wood and Lindsay Anderson, most significantly), could only become a self-conscious artist when he had lost faith in his subject matter. The modern world, the dissensions of postwar American society, destroyed that faith. But this implies a very simple identification between the historical sense of Ford's films and American history. Ford dreamt of a past, call it 'America' for argument's sake; as he got older, he both simplified it and allowed the processes that brought it into being to become more obvious. He simply bothered less with the art that conceals art.

Of course, the encapsulation of American history within Ford's version of it was problematic not just at the end of his career but from the very beginning. The *Movie* article quoted above goes on to argue: 'In reactivating the potential of the Western to reflect imaginatively on



American history, the terms Ford reinvents are essentially those of the nineteenth century, incapable of directly confronting twentieth century developments. Even outside the Western, the terms Ford seems able to bring to even a contemporary setting (The Last Hurrah, say) are those of an imagined past.' Here and in a later issue of Movie, No 25, Douglas Pye convincingly demonstrates how the contradiction between the community values Ford would have liked to see survive and the actual society that is on its way is evaded in Stagecoach (the 'escape West' at the end), then gradually faced up to in the cavalry films. 'A remarkable historicising of Ford's sense of the West' begins in Fort Apache, in which the Civil War and its aftermath 'have exerted a determining influence on many of the characters.'

The end of this is a brilliant analysis of The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance and of the way the film has to scramble its genre in order to accommodate historical change: 'Tom Doniphon (John

Wayne) can remain central to Shinbone only while Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin) lives; this in turn suggests that the vitality of old Shinbone depends on a social situation in which the balance between anarchy and control is precariously maintained . . . The film refuses what remains generically possible, that Tom could shoot Liberty and continue to lead the community into the beckoning future . . . the old West dies immediately the tensions on which it is centred are resolved . . . The legend that will continue to be printed [that Ranson Stoddard shot Liberty Valance] denies the vitality and strength of the old West and overturns the generic pattern in a way that amounts to an attack on the Western

What this suggests is that Ford's past, 'his' West, is not simply overtaken by historical developments, they are generically different versions of events, and a kind of convulsion (the double ending of Liberty Valance) is necessary to make one come out of the other. Two things

follow from this. After such an attack on the Western, it is no longer possible for Ford to make 'em like he used to; and when he attempts, in Cheyenne Autumn, to acknowledge this reversal while holding on to the old format, the result is doomed by its contradictions. What is also involved is a loss of physical conviction in the re-creation of that past; Ford can no longer live so completely within it nor bring it so touchingly to life. Douglas Pye describes the world of Liberty Valance: 'In old Shinbone, there's an overall sense of reconstruction rather than the apparently spontaneous life of, say, the dance in Clementine. Community as something alive, to be believed in, now seems firmly a thing of the past, both within the drama and in Ford's imagination.' The dream is less attractive because the apparatus is showing.

The Clementine dance is also a point of comparison for Robin Wood (Film Comment, Fall 1971): 'The schoolroom scene in Liberty Valance, though it has something of the same thematic value the development of civilisation within a primitive community—seems in itself relatively cursory, as if Ford were by now content with establishing what was necessary where earlier a major element in the creative impulse had been an outgoing love and tenderness for the thing itself.' Although Wood values Liberty Valance over Ford's other late films, these remarks are part of a tendency to see a straightforward decline in his creative powers, and an equally straightforward connection between Ford's condition and that of society. '[Ford's] achievement depended on a commitment to ideals which the society Ford lives in has signally failed to fulfil. But that invalidates neither the ideals nor the films. One shouldn't expect Ford to be able to cope with the kind of radical reorientation the failure of those ideals within American society demanded.'

This formulation not only lends a satisfying historical inevitability to the rise and fall of Ford's career, but makes it seem awfully high-minded, as if he were one of those teachers of American history and civics who recur throughout his films. But 'ideal' is in fact the giveaway. Ford built his communities out of a canny combination of unashamed sentiment and elements of American mythology, and it is disingenuous to pretend that they ever represented a real prospect for the society in which he worked. The contradiction between the two simply becomes more evident: the 'escape West' of Stagecoach is ruled out by the flashback framework of The Man Who Shot

Liberty Valance.

But there is idealism also in Liberty Valance, a more austere variety which has to do with that impatience for making it look good, for physical conviction and humanising touches, and a concentration on an idea as such. An old man's impatience is involved here. In his biography of his grandfather, Pappy, Dan Ford describes how Liberty Valance-one of the few projects of

Ford's last years that he initiated himself, 'an auteur project all the way'-was actually made: 'When shooting started in September, John worked quickly and efficiently-too quickly and too efficiently. He shot with a lack of concern that bordered on indifference, cut corners whenever possible and filmed almost entirely on a sound stage. Everyone that I talked to spoke of John's "lack of energy," of his complete disregard for background effects, for extras, for smoke and commotion.' Ford is no longer able to relish the community life of Shinbone as he once did in Clementine and the cavalry films, and Liberty Valance seems to exist as a series of receding frames; even its slapdash production values feed into a sense of its formality and austerity. If not actually attacking the Western, Ford might be closing down his version of it.

Curiously, Lindsay Anderson, who in his recent book About John Ford . . . goes further than Robin Wood in embalming Ford in humanistic pieties, and regretting the spiritual decline of his latter years, almost commends Liberty Valance as a Brechtian 'parable for cinema'. Andrew Sarris, whose auteurism Anderson spends a good part of his book decrying, draws exactly the same conclusion about Ford's last film, 7 Women, for which neither Wood nor Anderson has any time at all. Even without invoking Brechtian distanciation, however, it is easy to see that both films raise questions about Ford's art quite outside considerations of how he saw America's past or its national ideals. 7 Women, in fact, takes itself explicitly out of that context and into a genre which almost forbids the realistic details and sympathetic characterisation of, say, Clementine.

If the perfunctoriness of Liberty Valance gives that film its distancing edge, 7 Women (a film also made 'almost entirely', in fact defiantly, on a sound stage) goes one better, giving perfunctoriness the edge of lush, MGM 'art'. This might be thought appropriate enough to its very unFordian subject (all-female melodrama) and setting (30s China, a barbaric never-never land). But such trappings don't really disguise the fact that it is in essence a Western, with its isolated mission/fort and its band of missionaries/pioneers threatened by marauding savages (no dualism here because, Mongolian or Indian, savages are savages in the echt Ford world-view). Critical argument about this transference has centred on what it signifies in Ford's relationship to history, to America, to the moral values of his art. Has the civilisation vs savagery theme merely become a pretext for aesthetic abstraction? By comparison with his Western pioneers, Ford's missionaries are a self-deluded, unprogressive lot. Most significantly, their mission has become their world, one whose hermeticism Ford seems to enjoy: it eliminates tiresome locations and allows him to sketch artful compositions (in Panavision even, another uncharacteristic touch). These settlers don't sally forth to tame the wilderness, it bursts in on them, with choreographed regularity.



'Shall We Gather at the River': Emma Clark (Sue Lyon) and pupils.

But 7 Women is not Ford at the end of his rope, all moral and spiritual values exhausted, but a place he has been to before, where the spontaneous poet of the American experience does engage with abstractions. Its achievement is not unrelated to its deliberate oldfashionedness, and to the date, 1935, that both sets the action and signals how the film might be realigned in Ford's career. It certainly insists on being read in negative terms, but this is not the same as the empty formalism with which it has been charged, nor a director's worldweary envoi to all that was finest and strongest in his past. It is a more literal kind of negativity, not unrelated again to one of the deepest impulses in that past. To see 7 Women as Ford's last Western is also to recognise that it is the only possible coda to the death of 'his' genre in Liberty Valance. After the false revisionism of Cheyenne Autumn, it is a true reversal, Ford through the looking glass, in which everything-from the trajectory of the action to the disposition of the sexes—is back to front.

'Get your kids out of here. Move them up into the fields.' —'What fields?'

Among the sins of 7 Women, Lindsay Anderson lists '... a tense concentration on plot that left no room for relaxation or the grace-notes of humour. Its style of significant melodrama harks back, indeed, to Ford's collaboration with Dudley Nichols.' Screenwriter Nichols, of course, is the villain Anderson has always held responsible for encouraging the worst tendencies in Ford, the 'artist' as opposed to the 'poet', the portentous expressionist of The Informer, The Fugitive and The Long Voyage Home as opposed to the natural lyricist of They Were Expendable and The Quiet Man. In this Manichean view of Ford's 'split personality', its dark and light sides, Anderson is even followed by Andrew Sarris, who has described Ford's reputation revolving round the opposed poles of The Informer and Wee Willie Winkie.

7 Women has its flourishes of significant shadow-play, but its style could not be called expressionist (at least in the usual sense of the term). Similarly, though its plot and characters are schematic to a fault, they don't seem to work either symbolically or allegorically. Nevertheless, the notion that the film might have been written by Dudley Nichols is suggestive. There is even substantiating evidence for this ghostly attribution. Ford first worked with Nichols on a 1930 submarine saga called Men Without Women. The title, switched around, obviously applies to 7 Women, as does Peter Bogdanovich's thumbnail summary of the plot: 'Fourteen men are trapped in a submarine; finally, one man must stay behind so the others can escape.' Put this way, both films sound like wonderfully Boy's Own (or Girl's Own) tales of Captain Oates-like sacrifice for the good of the group. But Ford himself has given a more abstract gloss to this pulp material, in an interview with Jean Mitry quoted disapprovingly by Anderson: 'Ford even went so far as to propound an aesthetic, "I would think that it is for me a means of confronting individuals. The moment of tragedy allows them to define themselves, to take stock of who they are ..." Could this be a remnant of Dudley Nichols' theorising, dusted down for the occasion?'

As a statement of a theme, it is not so much theoretical as general, although one can see how it fits the lowering atmosphere of The Informer, The Fugitive and The Long Voyage Home, the expressionist world where characters confront themselves in their own shadows, doppelgängers, alter egos, et al. 7 Women, though minus the shadows, fits the theme so well as to seem a caricature of it—in fact raises the possibility that in order to become most himself Ford had to distort, artificialise, much of what before had seemed to come naturally. 7 Women is expressionism internalised. The John Ford, shameless silent exponent of sunny Americana, who went to Germany in 1927 and became infected by



Dr Cartwright (Anne Bancroft).

the brooding Murnau, and thereafter lived a double life (or as 'a split personality'), turning from Wee Willie Winkie to The Informer, has here come together. Now it is the unreality of what we are shown that throws the shadows. Or the exaggerations of what we are explicitly told to read as 30s melodrama in a context of such simplicity—a single set with a few thatched buildings, some gnarled suggestions of trees, and an empurpled Metro sky, another step down the minimal road from the impatient dressing of The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance. The effect is rather like the decision to take a Panavision camera into such a tight place, and then turn out small miracles of composition. It is perverse, in a word, and in this last great perversity Ford turns on himself, confronts himself, like characters forced 'to define themselves, to take stock of who they are.'

So much of 7 Women is defined in terms of what is not there—any sense of a real world, to begin with. Behind the opening credits, brigands ride back and forth in a natural but anonymous land-scape (Southern California for Northern

China). They are an equally anonymous threat—an abstract pressure to be felt through the long exposition and character development that follows. Immediately after the credits, the camera cranes down from the signboard of the 'Unified Christian Missions Educational Society' above the gate of this frontier outpost ('... near the border of Mongolia...') and glides forward, ushering us through the gate and into the compound behind the car of the mission head, Agatha Andrews (Margaret Leighton). What we are introduced to, the tableau that awaits at the end of this shot, is a world of perfect harmony, or at least strict order; a fantasy of the white man's fiefdom in the Orient, houses with turned-up, Aladdin-style rooftops, a Chinese houseboy dancing attendance, two groups of children clustered round Miss Andrews' assistants, young Emma Clark (Sue Lyon) and spinsterly Miss Argent (Mildred Dunnock), and, after the martial chords of the opening, timeless shangri-la music from Elmer Bernstein.

What is also excluded from within this community is any sense of family, the bedrock of Ford's civilisations out West. There is a married couple, Charles and Florrie Pether (Eddie Albert and Betty Field), who are expecting a child, to the barely concealed disgust of Miss Andrews. But even in terms of the Pethers, this is made to seem a less than positive event: they married late because he was bound to an invalid mother, and have come to China since a lay mission was the closest he could get to a pulpit. So forty-two-year-old Florrie awaits her baby, with barely concealed hysteria, in what she calls 'the last place on earth'. Another denial of family is the only other (would-be) sexual liaison in the film-Miss Andrews' repressed attraction to Emma. The latter remains a sexually neutral novice throughout, her promise (as Stanley Kubrick's Lolita) only realisable outside the mission.

The disorder of these relationships suggests a world about to collapse in on itself-suggests, in fact, that 7 Women might easily have slipped into noir-ish morbidity, even into the horror film (that off-shoot of expressionism), if its own expressionism had not been internalised. There is a further symptom of this in the cloud of religious references. Where the chiaroscuro of The Informer and The Fugitive embodied a doom-laden Catholicism, here there is almost no visual symbolism. But the dialogue is full of invocations of a God whom the action seems to deny could exist; characters again twisting in on themselves to assert a faith which circumstances have put beyond their grasp, Miss Andrews' despairing cry of 'God isn't enough-God help me, but He isn't enough' being the conspicuous example.

7 Women, implicitly if not explicitly, is a land of shadows—a land Ford had the itch many times to visit after his first brush with Murnau-ism in Four Sons (1928), and where Dudley Nichols in particular was pleased to lead him. It is not the bleak, nihilistic final stage in Ford's career-long romance with Ameri-

can history. It is his historical dream displaced and turned inside out-and its characters are better understood in terms of such inversions than as a statement of Ford's bewilderment about changing American values. To apply the civilisation vs savagery model of Ford's Westerns, to search for positive civilised values in the religious community here (as Robin Wood does) and then be disappointed at not finding them, seems beside the point. Just as unconvincing is the attempt by Joseph McBride and Michael Willmington, answering Wood in Film Comment, Spring 1972, to find positive good in the character of swaggering, swearing, smoking and boozing Dr Cartwright (Anne Bancroft), who eventually arrives to attend Florrie Pether and challenges Miss Andrews' puritanical tyranny: 'The character embodies everything Ford believes in: candor, compassion, moral commitment, defiance of hypocrisy, sacrifice . . . Wood finds only nihilism in what is actually the director's most earnest, clear-minded, and courageous act of faith in human nobility.'

What one tends to notice more in Dr Cartwright is her lineage from other (all male) Ford characters, appropriate enough to a view of the film as a kind of concertinaed running-backwards through Ford's career. In various articles, Dr Cartwright has been compared to Thomas Mitchell in Stagecoach, to John Wayne in The Searchers, to William Holden in The Horse Soldiers, and her acerbic relationship with Miss Andrews to the Wayne-Fonda set-to in Fort Apache. As such a composite, she is scarcely less of a caricature than Miss Andrews (two beautifully performed caricatures). The moral force, and thematic interest, of the film can't reside in her spiritual victory over Miss Andrews, sacrificing herself to the Mongolian bandits who sweep down on them so that the others can go free. That victory is implicit in the way the two women are presented throughout.

The crux of the film, both emotionally and visually, comes with a shot that begins in total darkness, slowly lit to reveal the corridor of the missionaries' quarters-which has been, strangely, neutrally, the focus of much of the action throughout. Dr Cartwright advances out of the gloom with a lamp-but having swapped her jodhpurs, leather jacket and stetson for a golden kimono, her hair teased up and decorated with beads. The transformation signals her surrender to the demand of bandit chief Tunga Khan (Mike Mazurki) for her flesh as ransomthough, Victorian fashion, she intends to poison both herself and him before the bargain is completed. It is a startling moment, both because of the sudden infusion of chiaroscuro-even if we might have felt it creeping up on the film; when she goes to Tunga Khan's room at the end, Dr Cartwright will be no more than a silhouette in the corridor—and because of the completeness of the role switch, from assumed 'masculinity' to feigned 'femininity', implying an incompleteness of identity in every direction. It continues and re-reverses the role reversals that

the film has been about, with an elegiac tone (connotations of waste, homelessness; Fordian regrets) that don't otherwise fit the genre or the melodrama. But the character and the situation live and breathe because of Ford's stylisation, not outside it in terms of 'human nobility'. To extrapolate in this fashion is to invite (fairly) the charges laid against the film's view of women in The Velvet Light Trap (August, 1971) which, to return to the references on the BFI's index cards, at the moment has the last word on 7 Women: 'The film's final vision is a form of moralistic role-mongering.'

As Robin Wood has noted, unsympathetically, much of the effect of 7 Women, its 'frissons', depends on our cutting mentally between it and the rest of Ford. But these repetitions run in an uncannily consistent direction: backwards. They seal the mission world inside itself, as if Ford had, dramatically if not historically, come to terms with the evasion of Stagecoach: the 'escape West' has been extended to the ends of the earth and there is nowhere left to run. When Dr Cartwright arrives, riding at the head of a mule train, the high long shot of her entry to the compound, with a children's hymn overlaid, has a peculiar poignance: hers is a Western convoy headed in rather than out. There is a black joke here somewhere, with connotations appropriate to a horror film (even a Buñuelian one). Is the mission an artificial bulwark against the world, or the only world there is? Is 'out there' too threatening to contemplate, or not there at all? When plague arrives at the mission, and Dr Cartwright orders Emma to take her children 'up into the fields', we see Emma leading her charges off to the tune of 'Shall We Gather at the River', but we don't see if they arrive at those hypothetical fields.

The only character who seriously tries to leave is Charles Pether, eventually abandoning his illusions to check out the rumours of approaching bandits. And he disappears from the film as soon as he leaves the mission—that he is killed, offscreen, is an event of secondary, or inevitable, significance. Pether is the most enmeshed in-and hence the first victim of—the film's reality problem. He is the character most wrapped up in his own dream, of being a minister of the gospel (his ecstatic address to a classroom of uncomprehending Chinese children is surely a black joke on all Fordian pedagogues of the 'American Way'). He finally faces reality when he gets up one night to the sight of a fire-reddened sky (one of Ford's prettiest illusions) and the sound of gunfire. What these suggest to the hard-headed realist Dr Cartwright is a bonfire and firecrackers. An unlikely Fordian hero, of course, Pether does recall the timid bank clerk of The Whole Town's Talking, who also lived in fantasy until it came to life in the form of his own evil alter ego. But that, despite its doppelgänger theme and expressionist leanings, was played as comedy and ended happily. The hero gets the girl and fulfils his other dream-travel to exotic places.



Charles Pether (Eddie Albert).

'Hey, Ching, Chang . . . Whatever the hell your name is. Come here!'

If Women's Lib has a case against 7 Women, one would think any commission for racial equality has a better one. They might begin with the title. Another small feat of arithmetic reveals that there are eight women who share the fate of being terrorised, rounded up and incarcerated by Tunga Khan-and it seems certain that the one not included in the count is the Mandarin princess Miss Ling (Jane Chang), who arrives at the mission with the fleeing British missionaries, is later subjected to special humiliation by Tunga Khan, but doesn't have a place among the stars. The bandits themselves are among the cinema's starkest caricatures of the inhuman barbarity that swarms outside the precincts of the white world, a device which returns with a vengeance to the conventions of the Western (and of fantasy/horror) after the attempted rapprochement of Cheyenne Autumn. But Ford's instincts, if not his sympathies, are truer in 7 Women: the 'historicising' of his West which conceivably began in Fort Apache only ends in stalemate in Cheyenne Autumn, which can neither realise the Indians' version of history nor quite relinquish the John Ford version. 7 Women respects generic rather than historical necessity, and deals more interestingly with the conventions by pushing them to extremes.

These Mongolian monsters are creatures of the darkness that is the province of expressionist film-making in any genre. In any other context they are scarcely defensible, although McBride and Willmington attempt a politically responsible reading—'one inevitably thinks of what has happened to humanity in Vietnam'-which only works if My Lai can be considered a strictly Vietnamese affair. What they also relate to is one of Hollywood's most effective genres for actualising paranoia, the 'lost patrol' movie, an early example of which, made

under that title by Ford and Dudley Nichols, appeared in 1934 (only a year before the Mongolian troubles of 7 Women!). A British army patrol stranded in the Mesopotamian desert is besieged at an oasis by Arab snipers who, hewing closer to the genre than 7 Women, never actually appear while they whittle away the soldiers one by one. They are, however, conjured through fulsome racist epithets. The best description of the impact of this 'other' culture in 7 Women is Andrew Sarris': 'These rampaging males wander around the countryside, raping, killing, plundering, and, worst of all, smashing all the windows, furniture and bric-à-brac. They affront every canon of order imposed upon the male by the female since the beginning of time . . .

Order, by fairly common consent, is the overriding Fordian ideal, what his various communities struggle to achieve. Inherent in this achievement is more than a little repression, of individual instincts and social minorities. What is also involved is formal order, the steady refinement, the paring down to essentials, of Ford's cinematic classicism. This takes him back to source, to D. W. Griffith, whose construction of a perfectly interrelated narrative is bound up with his 'reconstruction' of the Old South as a model of social harmony. In Ford, this is exemplified with unselfconscious zest in many of his idylls from American history. But the Ford who was inclined to experiment with his art, to tinker with the expressionism that opened self-conscious pockets in Griffith's seamless narrative, was also bound to expose that other repression.

As Ford's art approaches classical perfection, the purest economy of ends and means, it also comes closest to revealing itself, perhaps on the way to being transformed into something else. The expressionism of The Informer is translated into something more precisely selfrevelatory: the distancing spareness first of Liberty Valance and then of 7 Women (which edges back towards expressionism). A comparable process, of classicism-in-need-of-transcendence, takes the social order, which leads to the peculiarly contradictory world of 7 Women, a perfect fantasy in which even the nicest white characters (Dr Cartwright, for instance) assume the total subservience of their Chinese labour, but a world clearly incapable of sustaining itself. Part of the contradiction is that Ford is not explicitly attacking it: when the missionaries at the beginning invoke their American citizenship as proof against Tunga Khan, what is being indicted is evangelical blindness not imperialist truculence. This order yearning for a new order has led the film's admirers into some interesting contortions. In The Non-Western Films of John Ford, J. A. Place finds 7 Women 'bitter by virtue of her [Dr Cartwright's] death and our inability to understand and make it meaningful, sweet by virtue of the beautiful music and tracking shot,' invested with 'the deeply healing power of art.' Calling Miss Andrews' mission 'a

configuration of Ford's vision of order', Andrew Sarris has to add that Ford, unlike Brecht, doesn't distinguish between good and bad orders.

'It happened to be the only job going that took me out of the United States. And I had personal reasons for wanting to get out.'

In evaluating the films of Ford's creative prime, Lindsay Anderson finds it significant that only those written by Dudley Nichols are set outside America. But it must also be significant that these three projects with Nichols—The Informer, The Long Voyage Home and The Fugitive-were of Ford's own choosing, while some of his most celebrated slices of Americana at the time-Young Mr Lincoln, Drums Along the Mohawk, The Grapes of Wrath-were studio projects. If Nichols seduced Ford away from unadorned naturalism, the 'poet' pure and simple, he also shanghaied him from 'the landscape of the American past'. It was a direction in which he must have been half led by instinct anyway. Home and community are the strong focus of his pioneering Westerns, but often what gives them their poignance is a context of homelessness and isolation. Ford liked to dream of home-which is what his films are-more than he liked living there (which is what makes the past so attractive). Towards the end of 7 Women, while the missionary ladies are reminiscing, Miss Binns (Flora Robson), born and raised of missionary parents in China, puzzles about a 'home', England, where she has never been. By all accounts, the American historical event that most fascinated Ford was the Civil War-which sundered homes and threatened the Union-an event with which he never properly came to grips in film.

To equate, as Robin Wood has, the Dodge City burlesque of Cheyenne Autumn with contemporary American civilisation, and conclude that the subjugation of the Indian thereby 'becomes a monstrous and senseless national crime'-levelling moral outrage at both America and Ford—seems a strangely literal reading. Ford's Westerns do not simply transcribe America or recreate it with any identifiable accuracy. They create an ideal past in order to experience its impossibility, and then its death and dissolution. The Western dream perhaps tends inevitably to nightmare—and the Western to the horror filmespecially when it is displaced or comes up against its own national boundaries. So much is suggested by the career of Ford's natural successor, Sam Peckinpah, who o'erleaps the closed frontier into the dark country of Straw Dogs and Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia. (What is Straw Dogs but 7 Women told in terms of 70s rather than 30s melodrama?) Peckinpah attempts an epic remaking of America in Major Dundee (his cavalry trilogy rolled into one), then disappears into Mexico. Ford does much the same, then disappears into an Irish mist.

SPACE INVASION

▶ continued from page 87

hardware (reliable operational DBS) seems excellent. Doubting Thomases should consider Brussels, where LWT has a bigger audience than in the TV South area.

And the BBC could benefit from overspill into Europe of its satellite service. It has already secured residual agreements with the Belgian cable operators for existing overspill signals. With union co-operation it is not impossible to imagine that the BBC would be able to extend these agreements to DBS services.

This combination of industrial, commercial and BBC pressure has made the British DBS service a viable proposition. If the technological problems are, as seems likely, overcome, and if even half the promise of the system is fulfilled, British viewers will have the choice of six national television channels in 1986. By 1990 there might be five satellite channels alone. In urban areas Pay-Cable systems will be offering at least one additional feature-film based service, and possibly a further BBC-programmed Pay-Channel. In addition, the VHF system currently being phased out (405 lines) will almost certainly be re-engineered to provide a 625-line service.

If the changes follow the logic of financial opportunity and technological possibility, the pattern of broadcasting most likely to emerge in the next five to ten years is very different from the system that we know today.

As DBS channels are inherently national in their coverage, it would seem appropriate to place all national programming on these channels. If five are available, it is possible to imagine two BBC channels (BBC SAT 1: a premium subscription channel; and BBC SAT 2: a repeats-based channel); two IBA channels (ITV SAT 1: premium subscription channel; ITV SAT 2: sponsored programming); and one educational channel (Open University, Open Tech, Schools, etc). The present UHF system would probably change little, though some network material would inevitably be recycled from the premium satellite channels. There might be a greater emphasis on the exploitation of the regional characteristics of the transmitter system, and on serious programming. The re-engineered VHF system would probably be used for local television broadcasting, possibly financed by greater exploitation than is at present possible of low-cost local advertising, especially classified advertising using teletext systems.

The logical development, then, would be a three-tier system as follows: DBS for national channels; UHF for regional stations; VHF for local stations. Whether logic would prevail is another matter. What is unarguable is that there will be at least six TV channels available to the British viewer in 1986, and perhaps as many as twenty off-air channels by 1990. Additional cable channels might increase

the potential total to over sixty channels.

Two things will happen as the number of television channels increases. First, in terms of content, the highly produced 'programme' will inevitably be swamped in the broad spectrum of output by greater and greater quantities of live television broadcasting with much lower production values in today's terms. Secondly, both the rationale (frequency scarcity) and the means of broadcasting regulation will gradually become untenable. Although the Home Office favours the allocation of the two new satellite channels to the BBC (despite some hectic last-minute lobbying by some of the larger ITV contractors), it also acknowledges for the first time that broadcast regulation is rooted in scarcity, and that scarcity is rapidly coming to an end.

'British viewers will have the choice of six national television channels by 1986.'

The major question that broadcasters will have to address in the next five years is whether their purposes are best served by encouraging the emergence of a direct relationship between the producer and the consumer (i.e. a direct market relationship) or by artificial extension of their existing monopolies, or by some combination of both strategies. The BBC has clearly made a decision to compete in the market-place; the new Royal Charter is designed to enable the Corporation to maintain its existing monopoly status in newly developing areas. If it has to compete for audiences it will do so on an equal footing with its competitors. ITV on the other hand is divided in its approach. On the one hand the big diversified production houses such as Thames, Granada and ATV are likely to benefit from market pressures. But on the other, the regional companies could find that they are left behind with the regional rump of the ITV system.

It can be argued that the viewer has much to gain from deregulation and multiple-channel broadcasting. In the US genuine competition has led to an increase in quality on Pay TV services. The mass taste patterns exhibited by viewers at present are largely synthetic. As choice increases, passive viewing will decrease in favour of active viewing, increasingly on an individual basis (i.e. one viewer per set). There are those who believe that these changes are inevitable and that market forces cannot be halted. If they are right, then perhaps we should begin to consider those broadcasting philosophies and institutional structures that will temper the forces that have made Fleet Street what it is today.



· TOM MILNE

·IN THE MODIES.



Top: the jam session sequence in 'Phantom Lady' (Elisha Cook Jr centre). Above: a gathering of veteran jazz musicians in 'The Last of the Blue Devils'.

n Young Man with a Horn, Kirk Douglas impersonated a jazz trumpeter whose running battle against the straitjacket of commercialised music was modelled on the life story of Bix Beiderbecke. When his mentor in jazz, an old-time black musician, was finally claimed by tuberculosis, he was required to improvise a funeral elegy in appropriate tribute. The result was unbelievably vulgar. Since the secret was proudly proclaimed at the time that this solo was in fact dubbed by Harry James, the rigidly raucous James trumpet has justly had to shoulder the blame for adding one more to the film's many grievous offences against New Orleans.

What, though, of the off-screen drummer who lent unique dramatic conviction to a fondly remembered scene in Phantom Lady without ever receiving due screen credit? Hoping to trick a reluctant murder witness into talking, Ella Raines disguises herself as a cheap floozie and, at the theatre where Elisha Cook Jr is the drummer in a band all too obviously played by actors, gives him a blatant come on. At an after the show assignation furtively concluded across the footlights, he takes her along to a cellar jam session prior to more private pastimes, and Cook is soon flying in a frenetic drum routine. His mime in handling the sticks (unlike Sal Mineo's in The Gene Krupa Story) is ludicrously perfunctory; but no matter, the tale of ecstatic anticipation, soaring to a promise of orgiastic climax, is all there on the soundtrack.

Look up Phantom Lady in David Meeker's fascinating compendium*, and you will fail to find the name of this unsung drummer, but only because, after years of fruitless search, the answer finally emerged too late for inclusion. So here, by way of a stop press news flash pending its appearance in the next edition of Jazz in the Movies, is the relevant information, culled from a contemporary issue of Downbeat magazine. Music for the session was provided by members of Freddie Slack's band, with Slack himself at the piano, Barney Bigard on clarinet, Bob Bain on guitar. The drummer was Dave Coleman. Intriguingly, since the scene is translated intact from Cornell Woolrich's novel, the Downbeat articleafter celebrating the film as a musical milestone for Hollywood in that 'it marks the first time jazz music is used sensibly to emphasise a psychological element'goes on to note: 'Credit for this achievement goes to leggy Joan Harrison, former Girl Friday to Alfred Hitchcock. The jam session sequence was added to the original story after a conference between Miss Harrison and the scriptwriters.'

That single sequence in *Phantom Lady* may not seem to constitute much of a milestone, but the cinema's wary mistrust of jazz (no doubt because its greatest exponents were predominantly black) was such that for years Hollywood could accommodate jazz musicians only within a showbiz/coon show format, while jazz

^{*}Jazz in the Movies, by David Meeker. (New, enlarged edition.) Talisman Books, £14.95 and £9.95.

itself came to be more or less synonymous with dank and degenerate doings in darkened rooms. Even the film noir cycle of the 40s, tailor-made for the moods of jazz in its exposition of plangent paranoia, merely dabbled as marginally as Phantom Lady, usually in title sequences laying out nocturnal cityscapes. Incredibly enough, the first serious jazz-oriented accompaniment to a feature was probably Alex North's score for A Streetcar Named Desire in 1951. During the 50s, of course, the floodgates began to open, to be forced even wider by the advent of the New York school with films like Shadows and The Connection where the use of jazz was a whole new ball game.

David Meeker's attempt to document the field began partly out of personal interest, partly because no source existed offering reliable information as to the footage available even of star names like Bessie Smith or Billie Holiday, but chiefly because Hollywood practice was rarely, if ever, to acknowledge the names of soundtrack performers. Even now that the situation has changed since Quincy Jones insisted on having the jazzmen who interpreted his score for The Hot Rock receive full screen credit (this as recently as 1971), the old indifference still lingers on. Look at the credits for The Gauntlet, made in 1977, and you will find no mention, either on screen or on the sleeve of the original soundtrack album, of the personnel responsible for the tones of Jerry Fielding's score.

Anyone who has ever tried to compile a filmography, only to be frustrated by the lacunae left yawning by years of neglect, will appreciate the even more daunting task faced by Meeker in attempting to provide a reference guide to jazz musicians and their contribution to cinema. Apart from the problem of non-existent credits-Meeker contrives to include a list of the major jazz musicians who contributed to Gauntlet, obtained through private correspondence with the late Jerry Fielding—there is the further hazard that the Dream Factory is frequently to be found exercising a now-you-hear-it-now-yousee-it brand of illusionism. You may think, for instance, that you are seeing the Count Basie band when it makes its appearance blithely playing 'April in Paris' from a bandstand parked in the middle of the desert in Blazing Saddles, but you are not. You are listening to studio musicians playing on the soundtrack, while the band supposedly playing on screen is yet another scratch assembly of musicians (who were, significantly, paid more as actors than those actually providing the music).

More seriously, if you were struck by what Meeker describes as 'the haunting urban blues refrain' for alto sax in Taxi Driver, you may have rushed to the original soundtrack album as a source of information as to the identity of the brilliant soloist, named there as Tom Scott. True of the soundtrack album, but not of the film soundtrack, where the haunting quality is the exclusive property of sax-player Ronny Lang (who was

apparently not available when the soundtrack was re-recorded for the 'original' soundtrack album): Equally confusing and distasteful, if less damaging musically, was the earlier practice common to all the major Hollywood studios right up until the 50s of segregating black and white musicians on screen. To cite only one example, in one of the Will Cowan shorts made for Universal over a period of twenty years (a remarkable series, some 250 in number, many of big band interest), Charlie Mingus can be heard playing with the Red Norvo Trio, but is replaced by a stand-in on screen. Conversely, in a 1930 Amos 'n' Andy vehicle called Check and Double Check, Barney Bigard and Juan Tizol were blacked up to match other members of the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

Despite the long history of contemptuous neglect which means that there is now no known footage extant of such key figures as Jelly Roll Morton, Scott Joplin, Beiderbecke or King Oliver-and pitifully little even of the magnificent Billie Holiday, favoured by Hollywood with only one wretched feature film role-Jazz in the Movies amasses close on 4,000 titles, including shorts, animated cartoons, foreign films and television programmes (if available on film). Where else, having fallen in love with the volcanic vocal genius of Big Joe Turner, as revealed in Bruce Ricker's splendid tribute to the olden times of Kansas City jazz, The Last of the Blue Devils, would I learn that Turner can also be seen, inter alia, in an Edward L. Cahn cheapie of 1956 called Shake, Rattle and Rock!, and in a French vehicle for Brigitte Bardot called Boulevard du rhum in which he has a featured role as a bartender/pianist/singer? My only complaint, given the background information Meeker draws on and the pithy pertinence of his comments, is that these could-space and publisher permittingbe profitably extended.

But Jazz in the Movies has an importance of a different sort, in that it has become something of a focus for all sorts of hitherto uncoordinated activities. Difficult to know, in the perennial problem of the chicken or the egg, which came first. The fact remains that the years since Meeker first began collecting information for the original edition of his book, thereby creating a network of contacts among musicians and enthusiasts, have seen a remarkable proliferation of films seriously committed to jazz. In 1960, Jazz on a Summer's Day jumped into a virtually empty ocean that is now beginning to teem with feature-length records of live performances; and the first steps towards an oral history on film have been made, in interviews which are blessed with the advantage that, as an accompaniment to reminiscences, live or recorded music off-screen offers a good deal more flexibility than the film clips which necessarily interrupt interviews with film-makers in the interests of 'entertainment'.

Television has helped, of course, with its voracious appetite for interest programmes of any kind. But then so has

the existence of TCB Releasing Ltd, a British distribution company founded in 1972 by film-makers John Jeremy and Angus Trowbridge, and still the only film distributor anywhere in the world to deal exclusively in jazz movies. Meeker's connections in the jazz world, allied to his position as print researcher for the National Film Archive, ensure that new work in the field comes to the National Film Theatre (where the London Film Festival has made itself something of a specialist corner in jazz films) and simultaneously into distribution with TCB. It's a vicious circle of the nicest kind, and one which has gone a long way to taking jazz out of the ghetto as far as the cinema is concerned.

Even now, as is perhaps to be expected given that they tend to be the product of devotion first with skill coming a distant second, too many jazz movies are primarily (even exclusively) of interest to the specialist. A case in point is the delightfully quaint Maxwell Street Blues, premièred at last year's LFF. Faced with this film, a cinéaste might be struck by the picturesquely sleazy charm of the last, crumbling Jewish remnants that survive of Chicago's thriving Maxwell Street market. He would probably be astonished by Carrie Robinson, a wrinkled, toothless ancient cavorting grotesquely on the sidewalk magically transformed into a matchless gospel singer by the vitality of her performance. But he would almost certainly be left cold by the aimless fumbling which passes for direction and which muffs all the trump cards presented to the film by its veteran performers.

Not surprisingly, since John Jeremy had already proven himself a born filmmaker with an uncanny instinct for the rhythmic interplay between sound and image in Blues Like Showers of Rain, Jazz Is Our Religion and Born to Swing, TCB (the initials are borrowed from the jazz parlance of Taking Care of Business) threw down the gauntlet when, after long years of hard times, it turned the tide sufficiently also to turn producer and make To The Count of Basie in 1979.

Directed by both Jeremy and Trowbridge, less explorative than Jeremy's earlier work, this 75th birthday tribute to Basie is nevertheless exemplary—and as sleek as the best of the Fox musicalsin its lovingly impressionistic amalgam of film and music. Encouragingly, the challenge has been taken up over the last year or two by a number of new filmmakers, most notably Bruce Ricker with The Last of the Blue Devils, Gary Keys with Memories of Duke, and Lorenzo DeStefano with Talmage Farlow, all of which come off the screen equally excitingly as either film or music. Jazz movies have unquestionably come of age. Unfortunately, since this has happened with the accent on jazz rather than on movie, critics and even audiences have been left open to the prejudice of assuming a specialist orientation, which means that they can push these films back unseen into the ghetto only recently vacated. They have thereby missed much cinéphile joy.

FILM REVIEWS



Proust (Jürgen Arndt) and Céleste (Eva Mattes). Photo: Hermann Schulz.

A mysterious passage

Céleste/Tom Milne

Percy Adlon, a German documentarist making his feature début, might be forgiven the two or three shots in which speeded-up motion and a fisheye lens momentarily ruffle the tranquillity of Céleste (Artificial Eye). As he himself says, 'When you try to make something pure, someone always wants it to be purer.' A pity, all the same, in that Adlon has very nearly brought off the perfect kammerspiel. Based on the as-told-to memoirs of Céleste Albaret, a simple country girl who came into Marcel Proust's orbit as the wife of his favourite taxi-driver and remained to tend him virtually single-handed through the last nine years of his life, it is a conversation piece in which what is said-and more importantly, what is not-conjures great frescoes for the imagination, delineating everything from ambiguous emotions to those glittering social gatherings that formed the groundwork for A la Recherche du Temps Perdu.

Set entirely within and around the famous cork-lined room, the film takes waiting and silence as its twin keynotes. At the beginning, in a shot stretched to almost Straub-like agonies of expectancy, Céleste (Eva Mattes) is discovered sitting in the kitchen, patiently waiting for the bell that will end the silence broken only by muffled coughing from Proust's room, and at last allow her to begin preparations for his breakfast ritual. For us, however, lingering outside the cork-lined confines, the silence is assailed by a rebellious cacophony of natural sounds (the recording is direct throughout), as clocks tick, nerves tingle, wood creaks and dishes clatter.

The opposition is a trick, of course, but one which prepares for the silences and sounds that mark the relationship which gradually unfolds as Céleste and Monsieur Proust (Jürgen Arndt) talk away his sleepless hours. There are moments of intimacy, like the troubled night when Marcel tries to ease the loss of his beloved maman by asking Céleste to tell the story of her own last glimpse of home, and the echo of her homesickness from those far off days sends the camera winging off to scan her memories with placid shots of the old mill where she was born, the church where she was married, the wooden gate from which her mother watched and waved her last farewell.

There are, too, the moments of neutrality when Marcel becomes Proust in his professional capacity. Summoning a quartet of musicians to his apartment for a private audition of a César Franck sonata in which he had been struck by 'a mysterious passage', he invites Céleste to enter and share his pleasure. They sit listening together with the graceful intimacy of husband and wife, but she is not privy to the fact that this mysterious passage is at that very moment undergoing its final fictional metamorphosis into la petite phrase from Vinteuil's sonata. Nor, as is evident from her astonishment, is she sensitive to the emotional impact of the music ('What wonderful thoughts before dying ...') that makes him suddenly burst out with the frightened request that she must never allow anyone to give him an injection.

But there are also moments when barriers are erected and intimacy repulsed. After a flirtation of gossamer tenderness in which Marcel claims that he has remained a bachelor because she is the only person he could ever have married, Céleste hesitantly asks whether he makes a distinction between carnal and platonic love. Her reward is a hostile glare as Proust snaps, 'I don't know what you mean.' Respecting the reticence with

which Céleste Albaret stoutly maintained that she never saw or heard anything untoward during her years with Proust, the film remains silent about his sexual preferences apart from one early sequence where, hitherto bedridden, Marcel determines to make one more foray into his beloved salons. Excited as a child embarking on a midnight feast as he struggles out of bed, calling on Céleste to prepare his towels, send the necessary messages and order flowers, he gesticulates wildly in a gay abandon of effeminacy.

This is the only time the mask slips, however. And a later sequence in which he describes an observational visit to a male brothel in quest of descriptive detail, is shot and performed with the hieratic rigour of a Racine tragedy: Céleste doing the emoting as Marcel recounts his findings with the clinical detachment of a scientist. The point here, I think, has nothing to do with whether or not Proust was homosexual. Rather, it is another of the film's fundamental oppositions: between the Marcel of the earlier scene, who is playing, having fun, letting his natural inclinations take control, and the Proust who is at work in describing the secret perversions of the brothel, imposing the perspective of his art on what he has seen and felt.

The pattern is completed by one further opposition, this time between art and nature. Or, if you prefer, between the man who has no body left, only imagination and memory, and the woman who is instinct with life. The heart of the film is therefore contained in the nocturnal ceremonies where Proust, returning exhausted from his increasingly infrequent forays into the social world still swirling to its doom outside his sanctum, treats Céleste to spellbinding reenactments of the sayings and doings he has culled in his researches. He is, in effect, using her as a litmus test to discover whether there is life and not merely memory in his observations.

Never remotely academic in depicting the writer, and leaving literary reputation to take care of itself, Céleste is really a Proustian film rather than a film about Proust. On the one hand, the relationship between Marcel and Céleste is time regained, the restoration through her of his adored mother. On the other, its texture is achieved primarily through techniques of association, with Marcel, Céleste and A la Recherche du Temps Perdu bound inextricably together by three marvellous montage sequences which bring reality to memory. First, the images of Cabourg (including the very oval window at the Grand Hotel from which Proust used to watch the sunset) as Céleste recalls her initial refusal, since stubbornly upheld, to address him as Marcel rather than as Monsieur Proust. Then shots of stately mansions and street plaques in the Faubourg St Germain (with names like Greffulhe, Castellane and Hamelin evoking the real-life personages who modelled for the vanishing society of A la Recherche) as Marcel

remembers how she first brought her life to his living death. And finally, the images of Céleste's native village of Auxillac as she uses the balm of one nostalgia to soothe another.

Since Adlon claims (and displays) antecedents in music, literature and art rather than in the cinema, it is difficult to pin down the particular quality of his style here. More than anything else, with Jürgen Arndt and his languorously liquid Oriental eyes bringing a hallucinating resemblance to his impersonation, it is based on faithful recreation of poses

familiar from photographs of Proust, as well as of the celebrated sanctum. If one can also detect the hand of the art documentarist, it is not in the sense that the opening shot of Céleste patiently waiting on an upright kitchen chair suggests a Vermeer, since the subsequent free movement within the frame plays havoc with notions of formal composition. Rather, to use a phrase employed by Adlon himself instead of the usual true or realistic in searching to describe an effect that pleases him, 'it's more ... more Cézanne.

An act of willed humanity

A Girl from Lorraine/Nick Roddick

The French cinema has never been particularly good at angst. Faced with the need to recount an undefined discomfort at living in the modern world, French directors have tended instead to try to account for it, placing it in a political context (Godard's Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle), poeticising it (Truffaut and Franju), treating it as a modern theological or philosophical problem (Bresson's Le Diable, probablement and Resnais' Muriel) or finding a metaphysical genre peg on which to hang it (Melville and, in a very different way, Rivette). Claude Goretta, being Swiss, approaches the problem from a somewhat different perspective: simple despair, partly redeemed by what, on the dust jackets of paperbacks, it has become fashionable to refer to as 'an act of willed humanity' (meaning that the writer/filmmaker thinks it may not be that bad, but

can't quite prove it).

The act of willed humanity in Goretta's A Girl from Lorraine (Gala) is stronger than in The Lacemaker, but the context is every bit as bleak. The film's French title is La Provinciale, and that is a key to Goretta's approach: his Paris, like that of Rivette's Paris nous appartient (to whose characters the city never really belonged), is a Paris of the outsider, seductive but hostile. His three main characters are from elsewhere: from Lorraine (Nathalie Baye), from Switzerland (Bruno Ganz), from Germany (Angela Winkler). The love-hate relationship with Paris permeates Goretta's film as much as it does his characters. Angela Winkler's Claire speaks the kind of slangdominated French that only an adopted francophone would feel the need for; in much the same way, Goretta's camera records the externals of Paris (the airport terminal, the Gare de l'Est, a corner café, a lighted Métro running above ground against a winter cityscape at dusk) with an outsider's fascination and even affection for the impersonal—the sort of surrogate Parisianisation that makes tourists leave Métro tickets casually showing in their wallets for months afterwards.

As its title implies, La Provinciale is as much about Paris as it is about the

girl from Lorraine (provincial being a term which only has meaning when applied from the capital). It is a morality tale about a mature innocent at risk in the metropolis. Made redundant in her almost allegorically named native town of Homecourt, Christine sets off with her unemployment cheque to seek work in Paris. The accommodation problem is solved (one feels rather because Goretta didn't want to deal with that aspect of the story) by the loan of a flat belonging to a friendly Homecourt printer; but work is more elusive. Her chief contact, a crooked construction company chief, tries to molest her, and she drifts into a variety of temporary jobs (handing out leaflets, selling overpriced, cheaply tarted-up 'luxury apartments', appearing in a Chocolait commercial), as well as into an affair with a Swiss pharmaceuticals executive (Ganz).

She initially resists, telling him she doesn't want to become a parenthèse in his life, but becomes one and is hurt. Through the commercial she meets an advertising company head (Patrick Chesnais)—the film's only major Parisian character-whose wife has just left him, and who commits suicide shortly after Christine has tucked him up, dead drunk, in bed. She also meets a struggling actress, Claire, who resorts to prostitution as a way of not going under ('A few hours of suffering a week: it



La provinciale (Nathalie Baye).

means I can live'). At Claire's bidding, Christine goes along to a weekend 'seminar' for businessmen and becomes involved in an obstacle race organised partly as a joke, partly (though not, of course, explicitly) to humiliate the women. She wins the enormous prize (10,000 francs), but hands it in disgust to Claire and leaves. 'Where are you from?' asks the servant who drives her to the station. 'From Lorraine,' she replies, 'and I'm going back there.'

For all his skilful handling of it, Goretta cannot make the race appear anything other than symbolic, especially when Christine, with a commanding lead, stops dead just short of the finish line (to indicate her contempt), then sprints across it to beat the banker's daughter (indicating her superiority). sequence of events just before and after her initial departure for Paris likewise has the symmetry of a morality tale. She leaves her puppy with friends (it is run over by a truck before she has even left, but she is not told this), is given a farewell party by the choir in which she sings (including a specially composed ode, 'Adieu Christine', which shades into the Internationale), and leaves for Paris listening to a tape of the party, awash in the tendresse that Claire says is her clients' chief need. In Paris, it soon evaporates: she cannot find the flat (the concierge is not on duty on Sundays; a dismissive Parisian voice mutters 'Connais pas' from behind a closed door when she asks for instructions), her prospective boss contrives to spill orange juice down the front of her blouse then eagerly tries to wipe it off, and she causes a minor car crash (which is how she meets Ganz). The low spot in the film is reached when, after Ganz's first departure, a miserable Christine walks away down the air terminal corridor with the camera tracking back in front of her. A similar tracking shot at the end of the film signals her return to self-respect: she walks along the station platform, gradually beginning to smile, starting to whistle, out of the city with the sun finally catching her face—Goretta's act of willed humanity.

A Girl from Lorraine is a film of modest ambitions but, thanks to three superb central performances and to Goretta's Renoir-like detachment (the mean Parisians are balanced by friendly ones, like the café owner who rescues her from three youths; the businessman who tries to talk to her at the seminar seems genuinely sympathetic), it is a film which slowly grows on one. Behind the cool surfaces of Goretta's Paris and behind Nathalie Baye's half-genuine, halfembarrassed smile, there is a real human situation, sensitively enough handled. Like The Lacemaker, A Girl from Lorraine is banal but satisfying, building no enormous extra constructs of meaning around its plot (in retrospect, the Internationale seems a slight aberration), but dealing more than adequately with its subject. In a world of exaggerated gestures and flashy archetypes, a little banality is no bad thing.

FILM REVIEWS

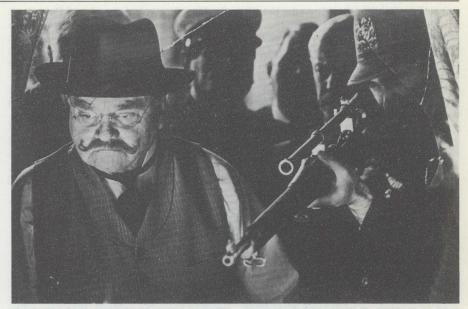
Fact & fiction

Ragtime/Tim Pulleine

Published to chart-topping acclaim in 1975, E. L. Doctorow's Ragtime is a curious work, a slice of popular history recycled less as fiction than as (to borrow a Truman Capote formulation) a 'nonfiction novel'. Clearly the bestselling renown of Doctorow's original has to a fair degree underwritten Dino De Laurentiis' packaging of it into a lavish two-and-a-half-hour movie, and Ragtime (EMI) would seem to assume that its audience has some familiarity, if not necessarily at first-hand, with its source. Equally clearly, this source poses a tricky problem of adaptation, if not perhaps to the extent of the much disputed recent case of The French Lieutenant's Woman. For whether one chooses to regard Doctorow's potpourri of the fictional, the factual and the fictionalised as a feat of artistic conjuring or merely as a rather dubious confidence trick, the fact remains that it is predicated on a wholly literary conceit, using its authorial voice (there is no dialogue as such) to inveigle the reader into a labyrinth not so much of illusion as of allusion.

Partly this depends on a kind of scattershot name-dropping, with walk-on appearances in the text by all and sundry from Freud and Jung, glimpsed having a go on the amusements at Luna Park, to Pancho Villa and the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The historical figures who take precedence, however, are the escapologist Harry Houdini and the protagonists in what, as Doctorow reminds us, contemporary columnists were confidently prepared to dub, even with 94 years left to go, the 'crime of the century', the shooting of architect and bon vivant Stanford White by the deranged socialite Harry Thaw over White's dalliance with the latter's young wife. Intertwining with all this, and with one another, are an assortment of invented narratives, involving a Jewish immigrant who ultimately becomes a pioneer film-maker, a middle-class family in New Rochelle, and a black musician who, pursuing an ever more desperate search for justice in the aftermath of a racial insult, is finally gunned down after a police siege of the Pierpont Morgan Library.

The film version of *Ragtime*, directed by Milos Forman from a screenplay by Michael Weller (previously Forman's collaborator on *Hair*), offers a fairly close recounting of the narrative substance of the comparatively brief novel, while jettisoning—along with Houdini, who is only glimpsed a couple of times—most of its random apparatus of historical interpolation. It is true that at the outset, and again some halfway through, the proceedings are punctuated by scene-setting swathes of (unpersuasively fabricated) facsimile newsreels. But what is certainly not to be found here—and, though practical obstacles would doubtless have been



Rheinlander Waldo (James Cagney) at the Morgan Library siege.

insurmountable, one cannot help feeling that in any case the project would not readily have accommodated it—is anything akin to the interweaving of actuality and invention which constituted so unobtrusively original a cinematic form in Phillip Noyce's Newsfront (a picture, incidentally, whose pragmatic good humour has more than a little in common with the Forman of old).

Nor does the film seek to mediate its material in other ways, even if a reading of the cast list might initially suggest otherwise. For Stanford White is played by the writer Norman Mailer, himself the protagonist in a publicised affray some two decades ago, and other roles are taken by two great Hollywood veterans, Pat O'Brien and James Cagney, whose earlier screen partnership reached an apogee in Michael Curtiz's Angels with Dirty Faces, the prologue to which shows the characters they play growing up on the Lower East Side at roughly the same time that Ragtime is set. In the event, though, Mailer and O'Brien make only brief appearances, and the latter is not seen with Cagney. Mailer, however, rubicund and nattily moustachioed, brings an admirably natural command to his cameo of White, effectively offset by Robert Joy's nervously sweating, pasty-faced

As players in a costume drama-and the elaboration of the studio sets suggests that this is what Ragtime primarily aspires to be-such figures as these, along with O'Brien's portrait of Thaw's monolithically devious defence attorney, are theatrically effective. And when the scene shifts to the home of the manufacturing family in New Rochelle, with a further fine performance by James Olson as the straitlaced pater familias, ultimately permitting himself to succumb to a spontaneous smile, the interiors are animated with a wry affection and eye for domestic detail worthy of the creator of Taking Off. One might even find a thematic focus, the impingement of twentieth century dislocation upon settled nineteenth century attitudes, in the way that, starting with the bizarre discovery of an abandoned black baby in their garden, this family comes, through a variety of interconnections, to be caught up marginally in the aftermath of the Thaw trial, then more centrally in the Morgan Library incident.

The problem, however, lies in the interconnections themselves: the truth is that, removed from the slipstream of literary fancy into the domain of orthodox dramaturgy, the material requires too much to be taken on trust in the way of motivation and narrative logic for the film to manipulate it with any real success. Thus, the role of the immigrant Tateh is elided into virtual irrelevance, while the involvement of Olson's brotherin-law with Evelyn Thaw, and then with Coalhouse Walker, the pianist turned avenging bomber, remains basically unexplained in the anecdotal terms on which we are asked to accept it. Undeniably, though, the climactic siege, the kind of thing which has been pretty well foolproof on the screen ever since Angels with Dirty Faces itself, is compelling as florid melodrama, so that the ambling progress of Ragtime, however far it may be from constituting any grand design, at least contrives to end with a passage of nostalgically enjoyable suspense.

And then, of course, there is James Cagney, returning to the cinema after twenty years in retirement to impersonate the grandiloquently named Police Commissioner Rheinlander Waldo. Craftily introduced at the very outset, then held in reserve for the climax, Cagney gives a demonstration of star power fully up to expectations. He may be fleshier and bulkier now, but the sense of precisely contained energy is unimpaired and the cadences of the voice have yielded nothing in softly ironic relish. In his person and his performance, indeed, Cagney manages to show us a thing or two about legend and popular memory, even if the film which surrounds him mainly fails to.



Friends: Craig Wasson, Jodi Thelen, Michael Huddlestone and John Metzler.

Meet Me in East Chicago

Georgia's Friends/Richard Combs

The difficulty of describing Arthur Penn's new film is neatly encapsulated in the problem of what to call it. The original American title, Four Friends, has a plainness that is appropriate enough, but its factual assertion is open to challenge (are there four or five? is it fair to exclude the hero's crippled roommate at Northwestern University while including the friend who fades away after fathering Georgia's child?). The present title gets round that problem, but at the expense of making the film seem too cosily centralised ('four friends' at least suggests an atomisation, a loneliness within the collectivity, that is also appropriate to the film's style). The French have plumped simply for Georgia, which singles out both the story's prime mover and its mood (through the muchorchestrated song of the same name) without really pinning anything down. But then neither does the film. It takes place in the gaps between relationships, certainly between the four friendships, in stops and starts and comparable shifts of mood and theme. Like its central character, pursuing the immigrant myth of America, it is a narrative in search of an organising principle, bound up in a constant process of degeneration and

Broken down, the materials of Georgia's Friends (Fox) are not at all hard to describe. They belong, in the first instance, to writer Steve Tesich, who has already incorporated them in two widely differing screenplays, Breaking Away and The Janitor. But this, apparently, is Tesich's most openly autobiographical use of the material. Like his hero, Danilo Prozor (Craig Wasson), he was born in Yugoslavia, and arrived in the United States an already grown child at the behest of a father who had simply disappeared during the Second World War.

'We were introduced to each other for the first time at a train station in Gary, Indiana,' Danny explains at the beginning of the film in a voice-over (which, like much else, is not to be a continuing thread). Danny thereafter follows his author to Roosevelt High School in East Chicago (where he is carried out kicking and screaming, 'We're seekers of destiny, from a careers lecture on behalf of the local steel industry) and thence to Northwestern. Where Tesich's career from there has been rounded out in fantasy (as both playwright and screenwriter), Danny's can only go on falling apart and being reassembled. As the dialogue round the friends' concluding bonfire has it, there are still other places in America where they haven't been to look for 'America'.

But the strongest link between this and Tesich's previous scripts is not so much the immigrant background as the insistence on seeing America as two families, rich and poor. It's what gave Breaking Away an unusual (though in the end overrated) interest in class as an American reality, and an extra fillip to the noir-ish fantasy of The Janitor (something about the dark places inhabited in common by the working man of the title and the sleek newswoman). Georgia's Friends doesn't belong in either of these camps, or rather it's a poetic amalgam of them both. The Americanisation of Danilo Prozor is covered in a few abbreviated stages: the arrival in Gary, the moustachioed father whose insistence that life is hard won't allow him to acknowledge a friendly overture on a childish flute, the clapboard house in East Chicago with the steel smelter forever aglow behind it, the neighbour putting up a TV aerial and Danilo at night looking through their window at the flickering black and white screen. In a single cut, it is transformed

to colour, and eighteen-year-old Danny is playing clarinet in an ensemble with his friends Tom (John Metzler) and David (Michael Huddlestone), who skip off through the streets at night as though choreographed by Vincente Minnelli, to serenade the girl they all love, Georgia Miles (Jodi Thelen). That, at least, is how it is explained by the old lady who lives next door to Georgia, who is scarcely seen as a character, is allowed a couple of passages of narration, then dies.

It is the beginning of the 60s, and Georgia has all the self-dramatising style of a small town Isadora Duncan (her own model) or Liza Minnelli about to flower with that decade's counter culture. On the short route to her declaration, 'I'm so tired of being young', and the moment at the end of the decade when she indicates her first grey hair, her most successful outrage is probably her own wedding, with the father of her imminent child (Tom) on one arm and her bridegroom (David) on the other. Why she and Danny, clearly made for each other, don't make it until the end of the film, is one of the least assimilated pieces of movie lore in Tesich's script. They come together at regular intervals, for public slanging matches built round the kind of cute phraseology ('I wish I had two lives to live-I wouldn't mind spending one without you') that again conjures characters typical of Minnelli, V. On the rebound from one of these. Danny becomes engaged to the sister of his Northwestern room-mate, and is introduced to Eastern seaboard living of Renaissance splendour-and concomitant incestuous rivalry. At the wedding party, the father of the bride announces, pro forma, that he is not losing a daughter, elaborates, 'In effect, what I'm saying is, I refuse to lose a daughter,' then shoots her, Danny and himself.

It is a masterful melodramatic coup and, in terms of Tesich's filmography, a wholly unexpected convulsion, distorting the sociological focus of the script. Danny's attempt to swap his immigrant origins for this WASP establishment is scuppered not by inherent contradictions but by the inbuilt doom of Greek melodrama. Where it more easily fits is in Penn's filmography, since the wedding party (guests circulating on the lawn to a lush orchestration of the Third Man theme; the bride's father watching impassively from a window, observed only by a small boy who seems to divine more of his intentions than we do) has a sense of gathering storm, of a coming social apocalypse outstripping the sociological causes, already familiar from The Chase. When Danny, the sole survivor of the shooting, returns to the family mansion, he finds only the grieving mother, bereft of husband, daughter and, as it turns out, son, since his disease has finally claimed Danny's room-mate. Her announcement, 'Louie died September 29th. I buried him yesterday,' resounds like E. G. Marshall's funereal declaration at the end of The Chase.

In other ways, this might seem a less

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likely comparison than, say, Alice's Restaurant, with which Georgia's Friends shares a striking economy of means and expression, and a narrative that could be called neither picaresque nor episodic but which refuses to move in a straight line. They are both also bound up with the alternatives of the 60s: Georgia's Friends providing a kind of historical perspective on the counter-culture (or multi-culture) dream anecdotally isolated by Alice. To describe Georgia's Friends as by Alice's Restaurant out of The Chase hardly does it justice, but it does indicate something about the shifting energies of Penn's career. The many gaps, or periods of silence, in that career might be linked to his inclination to allow ever more gaps, possibilities, in putting films together. His search for stylistic alternatives is connected with the dynamic of his characters; it is also connected with a taste for actorish intensity, for social conflagration and melodramatic

resolution. The contradiction is strangely harmonised in Georgia's Friends, which sidesteps narrative so far that it really only coheres in terms of convulsive, apocalyptic imagery: fire, principally, as the old is consumed to produce the new. But the elegant simplicity of the filming is another alternative, encompassing such turmoil in a style that is poetically assured, clipped, allusive. Old Penn themes emerge in a way that now has a touch of the naive, or the serene. The adolescent problem with father figures (the make-or-break relationship of Little Big Man, that genuine picaresque of lost identity) is summarised in David. He has the most succinctly comic of the brief commentaries, as he finally moves into the inheritance he has dreaded from the beginning ('I walked around looking sad and miserable, hoping that everybody would see what a tragic figure I was ...'), his father's gift of fatness, baldness and undertaking.

Hollywood effrontery

Neighbors/John Pym

One can easily imagine why Hollywood deemed Thomas Berger's novel Neighbors a promising movie property. This savage tale of the humiliation of a staid East Coast suburbanite by his new neighbours, half-jesters and half-torturers, reads with deceptive ease. There are no problems of assimilation. The action is incessant; the unities are observed; horror piles on black-comic horror with everincreasing ferocity. Berger, it seems, knows and pins every telling detail of the life of Earl Keese, his luckless middleclass subject; like the greatest farceurs, he has the ability repeatedly to knock the reader down having just doubled him up with laughter. But there is something more. Thanks chiefly to the urbane and distanced neutrality of the narrative tone, Berger in the course of the novel subtly changes the heavily scatological farce into an affecting moral tale, compels the reader to wonder whether he would behave differently from Earl if faced with the catastrophes of Earl's final night, translates pathos into tragedy.

Neighbors is written with fluid economy; its comic incidents are balanced rather than merely strung together; in terms of craftsmanship it is as far removed from Animal House as, if you like, The Palm Beach Story. Elsewhere in this issue, Steven Kovács describes the ruling position of the Hollywood production pitch: the tag line that summarises the plot, doubles for advertising copy and, above all, hooks the moneyman. Berger's compulsive style—the book can be read on a plane journey between Boston and New York-demands this attention. Given this, it is not altogether surprising to find in the movie version of Neighbors (Columbia-EMI-Warner), before even the appearance of the Lady with the Lamp, a list of glowing quotes from the novel's American reviewersand an account of what the book is about. We have, however, paid cash for a movie; and the troublesome doubts about the reasons for Columbia's misplaced, overemphatic self-justification are rapidly confirmed.

The film of Neighbors, scripted by Larry Gelbart and directed by John G. Avildsen, does not aim to tap our worried imaginings. It is, rather, the blandest of studio-bound, studio-influenced contemporary comedies. John Belushi, a gilt-edged player and, in his own way, perfectly cast as Earl, stands on his propriety quite effectively; violence and snake-eyed malevolence, as well as the middle-aged sexual itch, lurk convincingly just below the surface. But he is, it's hard to forget, star Belushi doing his snake-eyed turn. (And this being an adaptation of a bestseller he was, of necessity, cast as such.) In this respect, the consistently underused Kathryn Walker, as Earl's blankly indifferent wife Enid, is far closer to the spirit of the book. Her ordinariness might, in other circumstances, have been unnerving; the ease with which she almost imperceptibly loses patience with the apparently vindictive Earl, slips into complicity with Ramona (Cathy Moriarty), the neighbourly siren who turns on and then against the helplessly seducible Earl, might have generated reverberations of panic in the spectator.

Neighbors is a self-regarding comedy: its references are to the movies, a running gag reminds us of Close Encounters (and indirectly that this is a fantasy, not to be taken seriously), its secondary characters are movie grotesques, comfortingly bizarre. Berger's subject was us, the readers, our deepest fears, the ease with which we can be made to change our

ground, delude and hate ourselves, the surrender of the spirit. This is strong meat, too strong for Hollywood. John Belushi has made a reputation, and this is not to belittle his immense stamina, playing anarchic outsiders. If Earl Keese had had a sky-larking college-age son, instead of Elaine, a punk student daughter, Belushi could have played him with effect, had this movie been a wholehearted knockabout farce instead of a filleted and faintly awe-struck adaptation. We should not be distracted by Elaine's regalia, nor have to squint at what is written on her badges (and, in any case, her mode is just imperceptibly wrong, an unBerger-like imposition); while laughing one should feel a distant chill at the girl's heartlessness, at the speed and ruthlessness with which those nearest to Earl turn against him.

Life's abrupt vicissitudes (so perfectly illustrated in Arthur Penn and Calder Willingham's Little Big Man, the only other of Berger's novels to have been filmed) are here reduced to the ordained ups-and-downs of a situation comedy. Disaster follows some small victory (or false certainty) not because fate ordains-which was how Jack Crabb, the adoptive 'human being', up to a point regarded the white man's pathological barbarity-but because, strange to report, smoothed-out and strungtogether incidents are what seem to sell tickets particularly to American movie theatres. Witness Animal House and, more recently, Raiders of the Lost Ark. A wilful lack of sophistication is, it appears, de rigueur for the real winners -and as I write, Neighbors, shorn of Berger's narrative voice, is doing substantial business in the US, the latest Dan

Aykroyd-John Belushi vehicle.

Neighbors is a sobering example. The lure of the bestseller, an 'outrageous national bestseller' no less (as the Dell 'movie edition' of the paperback has it), must have been overwhelming. But it proved an utterly deceptive attraction. When picked at, the novel closed in on itself, refused to release its secrets. Another though less sophisticated novel that lured with what must have seemed an absolutely surefire plot (and was written, incidentally, with a similar glittering precision) and then proved absolutely intractable was Martin Cruz Smith's Nightwing. Formula film-making has its uses, it can sometimes yield a respectable profit; but to attempt the transfer of a real novel is in almost every case to embark on a fool's errand. Having destroyed both Earl and his world. Berger, his creator, kills him off with a neat finality ('It could have happened to anybody,' Ramona says to her dying victim); Columbia Pictures, however, having tied up the ends of his life-both wife and daughter seem adequately accommodated-see off Earl in the neighbours' car (it was formerly his own) headed for some further indeterminate japery in the sun. If Neighbors proves a moneyspinner, it would have seemed imprudent to have closed the door too firmly.







Danielle Darrieux with Fernand Gravey (top) and Daniel Gélin (below). Max Ophuls on set.

'A famous film'

La Ronde/Francis Wyndham

A 'lost classic' will return to London for the first time in more than twenty years

Arthur Schnitzler's attitude to Reigen seems to have been consistently deprecating. In 1900 he paid for two hundred copies to be privately published and circulated among his acquaintances, describing it as 'a series of scenes which are totally unprintable, of no great literary value, but if disinterred after a couple of hundred years may illuminate aspects of our culture in a unique way.' Twentyone years later, when its production in theatres at Berlin and Vienna had caused a public scandal, provoking political riots and criminal prosecution, he imposed a ban on any future presentation. He had never intended it to be acted (he explained) but had merely wanted to show his readers 'in an entertaining manner that all people, rich or poor, intelligent or otherwise, speak in exactly the same way during the sexual act.' This year the work came out of copyright in Britain, and to celebrate the end of the ban four separate new translations have been made for performances on stage and television. Reviewing some of these with little enthusiasm, critics have vaguely referred to 'a famous film'. La Ronde is indeed much more famous than Reigen; but owing to legal complications attending its distribution a generation of cinema-goers has matured without the opportunity of seeing it. Its fame is due to its director, Max Ophuls, whose reputation has also matured during the intervening years.

It was made in Paris in 1950—a time perhaps as remote to a modern audience as Schnitzler's Vienna at the turn of the century must have seemed to Ophuls then. He had just returned to Europe from Hollywood, with The Exile, Letter from an Unknown Woman, Caught and The Reckless Moment behind him; and La Ronde (to be succeeded by Le Plaisir, Madame de... and Lola Montez) marked the opening of his last triumphant phase. Londoners, conditioned to austerity at home and a tiny travel allowance abroad, were dazzled by a sophistication which

seemed at the same time typically Austrian and typically French; the film was applauded for its civilised irony, cynical wit and bitter-sweet charm, while the theme waltz by Oscar Strauss became a popular classic of the period. Now *La Ronde* may be shown again. Does it still dazzle? Or have we grown too suspicious of bitter-sweet charm and so on to react with the same delight?

One thing is clear: if Schnitzler at his best was more bitter than sweet, with Ophuls it was the other way round. Schnitzler's original was unromantic, almost brutal in tone: a daisy chain of random couplings in which each sex exploits the other. The pattern of sentimental pretence and duplicity during courtship, followed by post-coital indifference, was repeated with only minor variations through contrasting social spheres, from low life via the opulent bourgeoisie to artistic bohemia. Ophuls' version, half a century later, softened this mischievously bleak study of prosaic promiscuity by approaching it through a haze of poetic nostalgia. His evocation of a never-never Vienna is blatantly stylised; the first shot is of a stage, with candles as footlights; the action remains contentedly studio-bound throughout and the sets have the gauzy, insubstantial look of theatrical backdrops or a once familiar landscape misremembered in a

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dream. By introducing a new characterthe Master of Ceremonies, elegant in evening cloak and tilted opera hat, who sets the merry-go-round tunefully turning-he also introduced an element of determinist fatality not present in the play. The Master of Ceremonies is a figure from expressionist drama, a puppeteer ruthlessly manipulating dummies while indulgently allowing them an illusion of free will. He is also, it must be admitted, a pretentious clichémuch more so than the broadly characterised 'universal types' of the central drama-and it took an actor with the finesse of Anton Walbrook to prevent him from seeming an irritating bore.

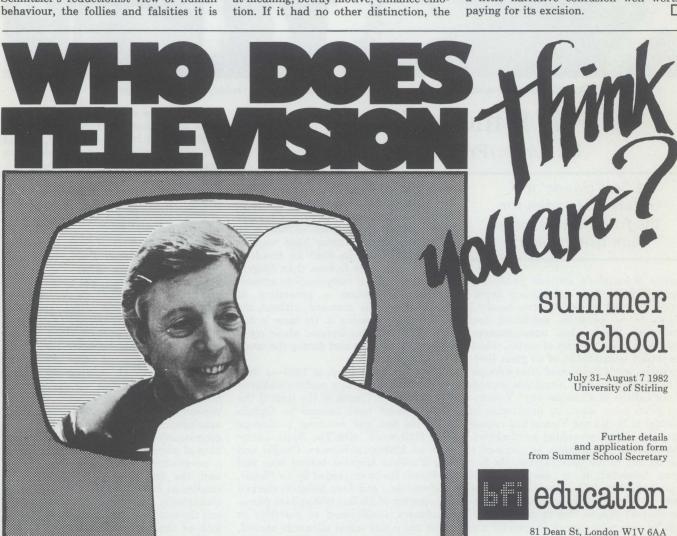
This device also enabled Ophuls to show us a little of what happens to the ten characters outside the two episodes to which each was strictly rationed by Schnitzler. In the process, the intrigue is prettified, becoming a circle of linked love stories rather than a catalogue of copulation or a relay race illustrating the spread of venereal disease. We learn that the soldier, after ditching the maid, falls in love with her too late; we see the husband sadly stood up by the grisette he had seduced with callous caution; and we understand that the grisette has lost her heart to the fickle poet.

Here, Ophuls flirts with sentimentality. Schnitzler's reductionist view of human behaviour, the follies and falsities it is driven to by the erotic itch, may have risked over-simplification and monotony but it was never glib. The notorious rows of dots he used to represent the act of love were tactful rather than arch. In stage productions today, the wretched actors are compelled by current convention to simulate the act, with effects both ludicrous and banal. Ophuls dealt with this problem by various exercises in winsome ingenuity—the most striking being an urbane intervention from the Master of Ceremonies with a reel of celluloid and a pair of censor's scissors. Did all this strike me as coy in 1950? I don't think so-but it does now. As so often in similar cases, one tends to the irrational belief that if anything has changed it is the work rather than oneself.

But such changes are of little importance: the work still dazzles. Ophuls' camera refuses to be restricted by the obvious limits on motion imposed by successive duologues in successive bedrooms. It roams with the inquisitive abandon and sensuous grace of a cat set free from a basket round the upholstered restaurants, chambres privées, café concerts, garconnières, theatre coulisses and misty riverside alleys which frame the action. The exquisite set and costume designs by George Annenkov do more than decorate: they interpret mood, hint at meaning, betray motive, enhance emotion. If it had no other distinction, the

film would survive as an anthology of acting by some of the most brilliant stars of the pre-New Wave French cinema. Has any actress been more delectably sexy than Simone Simon as the maid who seduces (is seduced by?) the 'young master'? No one could equal the delicate glitter of Danielle Darrieux in her two bedroom scenes, with clumsy lover and sanctimonious husband. Given the almost impossible assignment of playing a glamorous ass, Gérard Philipe lives up to his legend. Serge Reggiani, Daniel Gélin, Fernand Gravey, Odette Joyeux... all are consummate. Only Jean-Louis Barrault as the poet embarrasses by caricaturing a philistine's notion of the artistic temperament, and Isa Miranda is not given time to develop her interestingly harsh characterisation of the actress.

Apparently one of their scenes together, in a country inn during a snow storm, was cut by Ophuls from the final print—and its absence, disturbing the crucial symmetry, does make itself felt. (It contains the line 'This is better than acting in stupid plays', which can set a live audience giggling.) It was the first scene he shot, and it was on location. From the rest of the movie, glorying in the artificiality of a studio setting, it must have stood out for Ophuls like a sore thumb, and he reckoned the cost of a little narrative confusion well worth paying for its excision.



BOOK REVIEWS

The private man

HUMPHREY JENNINGS: FILM-MAKER/ PAINTER/POET edited by Mary-Lou Jennings BFI/£3.75

Is Jennings really such a forgotten man? Memory is an extraordinary insulator against reality. RSC's much-publicised first London production of La Ronde exposed a degree of vagueness about Ophuls unbelievable to anyone over forty, to whom comparisons with the film were not only natural but inevitable, and apparently no one stopped to ask why a play written in German and performed in English should be presented under a French title. Ophuls was a 50s totem; he has not been discredited, just forgotten. Jennings, it would appear, the same. On the occasion of the Riverside Studios show-films, paintings, photographs, collages, documents-devoted to Jennings in January, and the publication of this book, Lindsay Anderson was moved, reconsidering his famous essay on Jennings 'Only Connect' (1954), to ask the crew of his current film how many had heard of Jennings. He was greeted with total blankness: only one had, but even he could not name any of Jennings' films.

So, even the films, great though their theoretical reputation may be, are nowadays unfamiliar country instead of the landmarks we had supposed. The rest of Jennings even more so: understandably, since the only one-man show of his paintings was in 1937, and most of his mature works from the later 40s have never been seen at all, while his poems were published only in New York in an edition of one hundred copies, his major literary piece of creative editing, May 12 (the Mass Observation day-survey for George VI's Coronation), is long out of print and unfindable, and his other great book project, a literary/ visual evocation of the Industrial Revolution called Pandaemonium, though virtually completed. never reached publication at all.

The one big pity about the present book, otherwise admirably conceived and executed, is that it has no colour reproductions of the paintings. Surprisingly enough, that really matters. We are so used to thinking of Jennings in black and white that the controlled brilliance of the colour in his paintings of 1947-49 came as quite a shock. Even more, their complete originality. In his earlier paintings one can see clearly all the Surrealist connections (not for nothing was Jennings one of the organisers of the London 'International Surrealist Exhibition' in 1936), but for the later work we must look to some very unlikely comparisons indeed: early Duchamp perhaps (which he might possibly have known), but even more Mondrian from the time when he was wavering on the brink of abstraction (which surely Jennings cannot have known at all). In any case, these later paintings are not only a major discovery artistically, but do radically modify our view (supposing we have one) of Jennings' career as a whole.

Most commentators, including Anderson (as he now admits) in 'Only Connect', shuffle their feet a bit about Jennings' postwar films, not quite wanting to admit that they have an empty ring, or, as Anderson observes in his new epilogue to the 1954 essay in this book, by the time of Family Portrait 'The Past is no longer an inspiration: it is a refuge.' Seeing the films again in the context of Jennings' other arts, we do not get a picture of a failing talent floundering in a world he did not like, but rather of a polymath the balance of whose concerns has subtly changed. He began as a painter; during the war external circumstances (like having no time and no place to paint) made him a film-maker who occasionpainted; afterwards he became, all unbeknownst to most of his admirers, a painter who occasionally made films.

The other thing the show and the book vividly bring home is the absolute consistency of Jennings' artistic and intellectual development. The closing essay in the book, by David Mellor, provides a crisply sketched continuity (once he has got over telling us very pompously what he is going to do and gets on quite modestly with doing it): 'intermedia linkages and polysemy' notwithstanding, the relevance of Mass Observation, that very strange 30s organisation which concealed a Jungian heart under a Marxist exterior, to the Surrealism, and the relevance of both to the way of seeing things Jennings developed during the war, a Surrealist experience beyond the wildest dreams of the international movement, is absolutely unmistakable.

After all this, it is rather surprising to find some of the younger critics, encountering Jennings apparently for the first time, pigeonholing him patronisingly as a bourgeois intellectual would-be populist with nothing personal to say, who merely demonstrates yet again the pathetic inability of the pre-war intelligentsia to react radically to the world they lived in. That may well be true. But aesthetic judgment is something else again (isn't it?), and the fact that their generation failed to prevent the Second World War or foresee adequately the defeats of victory hardly invalidates the films of Jennings any more than the poetry of MacNeice or the prose of Isherwood and Orwell. What we see in all of them—but perhaps most powerfully in Jennings' total oeuvre—is what a later writer, equally disoriented, equally ineffectual, aptly called 'the birth of a private man'.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Japanese survey

IMAGES DU CINEMA JAPONAIS

by Max Tessier

Editions Henri Veyrier, Paris/135fr (paperback)

Faced with the riches and complexity of Japanese film history, researchers have tended either to compress everything into one volume, as did Anderson and Richie in their pioneering work with its cascade of then unknown names and titles, or to centre on a particular thesis, as did Noël Burch in To the Distant Observer, with its analysis of the forms of representation in the Japanese cinema of the 30s and 40s. Max Tessier's well illustrated French volume opts for the departmentalised approach, assuming a fair degree of reader ignorance and combining historical information with an enthusiastic invitation to enjoy a banquet of films.

Here, in both text and pictures, we meet the great popular heroes like Miyamoto Musashi or Tange Sazen, and follow the development of the samurai/chambara film from its beginnings in the prolific work of the recently dead Ito Daisuke, through Kobayashi's 'critical' reworking of the genre (Hara-Kiri, Rebellion), to the undistinguished remakes and ripoffs of the 70s. The directors who receive individual treatment, either in chapters or sub-sections, are chiefly those with a reputation in the West, from Mizoguchi, Ozu and Kurosawa (Tessier's 'great trio'), to the 'intimists' Naruse, Gosho, Shimazu and Shimizu. (The book contains few actual errors, though one notes that these two near namesakes are at one point confused.)

There are disadvantages, however, to such compression. Tessier lucidly summarises themes and attitudes, but devotes insufficient space to stylistic traits such as Shimizu's witty use of travelling shots and delight in long-distance compositions. On the other hand, he offers an amusing piece on the monster cycle and a graphic one on the erotic film, bringing the saga up to date with pertinent comments on the significance of Oshima, Imamura and Terayama, and bewailing, like others, the decline into commercialism and

conformity in the 70s. A valuable bio-filmography of leading actors and actresses is appended.

Tessier is aware of the importance of past history to Japanese film-makers and his book is based on many viewings undertaken on several visits to Japan. He also pinpoints some important films, such as Ichikawa's The Heart, which have never been distributed in Europe. Despite its compression, this is the kind of mini-history which can only excite the interest of the uninitiated. Its abundance of black and white illustrations are carefully chosen, although a potential British publisher might jib at some of the more explicit ones.

JOHN GILLETT

Inside Disney

DISNEY ANIMATION: THE ILLUSION OF LIFE by Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston

Abbeville Press, New York/\$49.95

'Animation,' Walt Disney said, 'can explain whatever the mind of man can conceive.' That is something of an exaggeration—an animator's device—but it is nevertheless true that the Disney studio developed and expanded animation to a point where it was capable of giving substance to most of men's dreams and a good many of life's realities.

Disney Animation is the story of how that was achieved, and the first extensive document on Disney animation to be written by Disney animators. Although this cumbersome, oddly shaped book is packaged by its publishers as a coffee-table work in the style of Christopher Finch's The Art of Walt Disney and Walt Disney's America, it is at once the most complete pictorial and factual record of the studio's methods, from the early days up to the latest animated feature The Fox and the Hound, and a step by step manual of procedures, tricks and techniques used in creating the illusion of life, each illustrated by reference to how Disney did it. It may well be that the future of film animation lies in the work of artists at studios other than Disney's. They would be well advised to study this challenging account of illusion-making at the Mouse Factory.

Much of what has been written about Disney has tended to mythmaking or iconoclasm, which is one reason why Thomas and Johnston's account of life at the studio makes such refreshing reading. There's none of that pretentious stuff about Disney as art—even if Disney himself was given to such pretensions. 'Snow White is not a cartoon, it is a

BOOK REVIEWS/LETTERS

work of art,' Disney said. This assessment of the studio's work is happily more prosaic: 'Walt was not making works of art to hang in a gallery. He was striving purely for entertainment.' Clearly Disney was not easy to work with, and some artists found his insistence on something more than perfection too demanding and not a little depressing. 'Why does Walt always try to get us to do things we can't do?' asked Fred Moore, the animator responsible for the refinement of the somewhat crude image of the early Mickey Mouse into his avuncular screen personality. 'Why doesn't he just let us do the things we can do?' The answer, of course, is that if he had there would have been no Snow White, no Pinocchio and no Fantasia.

In recent years, it has become fashionable to discredit Disney as an exploiter of other men's talents and to deny that he made any significant contribution to the films that bore his name. Thomas and Johnston credit the unique talents he did possess-as a story originator and film editor. So what if Disney couldn't produce an even vaguely passable likeness of the Mouse? He knew what he liked and he knew what worked; and he knew what would work for the public. He also had an unsung talent as an actor, frequently

acting out the comic business he wanted his artists to capture in line. One example shows the degree to which Disney manipulated the personalities of the studio's creations. The artists were planning a short, The Pointer, in which Mickey Mouse takes Pluto into the woods on a bear hunt. Mouse and dog are separated, and Mickey discovers that the bear is actually tracking him. Confronting the huge bear, the Mouse might have said almost anything, but Disney-who was Mickey's voice as well as his alter egospontaneously delivered the lines only Mickey could say: 'Oh ... It's you . . . that is, it is you—ain't it? I mean, it isn't Pluto ... Uh, I thought you were Pluto, but you're not Pluto ... you're you, aren't cha? Oh ... well, I'm Mickey Mouse ...

Disney Animation is illustrated with nearly 500 plates and thousands of black and white pictures, most of which have not been published before. In addition to colour stills and cel-paintings, there are storyboards, sketches, layouts and animation cycles showing, frame by frame, how the studio animated Pluto's battle with a sheet of fly-paper or Shere Khan's George Sanders sneer. There are also numerous caricatures by studio personnel.

BRIAN SIBLEY

Right turns

SIR,—Your Quincannon appears to suggest (Double Autumn 1981) that I might fulfil a useful social function, and it would seem quite mad to quarrel with a man who calls me 'intelligent', 'astute' and 'well-informed', but I think he might be interested to hear that I am having difficulty with his view of me as a rightwing ideologue. Am I Charles Maurras? Alfred Rosenberg of Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts? Has Quincannon ever read a real right-wing ideologue? As it happens, I am a lifelong American Democrat, and will be active this year in the campaign for re-election of us Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the man who led rare, successful Congressional fights against the present administration, opposing both the reduction of Social Security payments and the granting of excessive freedom of action to the CIA.

Does this sound right-wing? Well, I suppose there might be some use for this Richard Grenier who strides about America 'sneering', and 'loathing', and 'attacking', and 'trashing', feeling such 'contempt' and 'distrust' for all that is young and liberal, but I don't recognise him. (I championed Cheech and Chong.) I do encounter quite a bit of sneering in my appointed rounds, of course, but almost all of it seems to be coming in the other direction, aimed at America, its leaders of both parties, or Western society in general. I came to film criticism quite late, almost by accident, having travelled the world as a journeyman reporter (from South Boston to Paris, London, Dublin, Rome, Madrid, Warsaw, Prague, Moscow, Shanghai, Peking, Cairo . . . and back to Harlem, Chicago and East Los Angeles), and, given the miserable alternatives offered to us in this vale of tears, I don't think the West is bad at all. I even think it's worth defending. And I say so.

To find myself in the company of Alexander Walker, many of whose views I share, is flattering. I note with entertainment, however, that he is granted a specific indulgence denied me. 'As an Ulsterman, Walker knows that one consequence of the reunification of Ireland would be the imposition on the North of the most severe film censorship in the Western world.' It is often observed (but perhaps Quincannon hasn't heard it) that hold romantics can most extravagantly radical views on matters about which they know little, but when it comes to an area they know something about they can become very conservative.

I submit to Quincannon that if he knew as much about crime in the South Bronx as he knows about film censorship, he might find my views on Fort Apache (the execution of which I praise) quite moderate. They are highly popular, in any case, in the South Bronx.

As with crime, so with terrorism. Quincannon seriously misrepresents my attitude to Nighthawks (as indeed he does almost everywhere). I do not 'almost exult' at the audience's 'quasi-fascist' response. I am calling attention to a tragic fact: that a major terrorist campaign inevitably reduces freedom. If Quincannon can't understand this, the audience does. Since Quincannon's purview doesn't appear to extend much beyond Ireland, let us take Ulster. Would he say that the Six Counties are freer since the IRA Provos launched their terrorist campaign in 1968? If there is a Miranda warning for Provo gunmen I haven't heard about it.

But Belfast is probably a real place for Quincannon. Whereas New York, and other places I have been writing about, make his fancy take wings.

Yours faithfully RICHARD GRENIER New York.

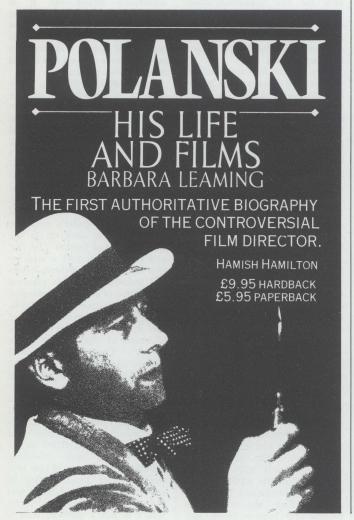
Truth Claims

SIR,-I was most interested to read Jerry Kuehl's article on 'Truth Claims' (SIGHT AND SOUND, Autumn 1981), which gave a valuable analysis of the claims to authenticity of drama documentaries. However, I would like to query one of his statements, namely that '... no filmed record of Nazi extermination camps has survived (if, indeed, any was made).' In my capacity as the Cataloguer for English, Classical and Hebrew-Jewish literature in Trinity College library, I was able to check various reference sources, to see if any filmed record did exist.

According to the Encyclopedia Judaica (Jerusalem, Keter Press, 1971), its article on the Holocaust quotes the collections of the Yad Vashem Institute in Israel as containing various types of filmed records relating to the extermination camps (Vol 16, column 697). Other sources of film and photographic records are quoted in The Holocaust: a record of the destruction of Jewish life in Europe during the dark years of Nazi rule by Martin Gilbert (London, Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1978).

There are at least two mainstream documentary films about the Nazi era that include shots of the concentration camps: The Black Fox, narrated by Marlene Dietrich, and Hitler: a Biography, based on the Joachim Fest book. Both of these used film footage taken from both the West and East German Film Archives, according to my recollection of the credits at the end of each film.

This would indicate that some



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LETTERS

filmed records have survived relating to the extermination camps, including both photo stills and moving pictures. However, it is unclear in Mr Kuehl's article whether he is referring to films made exclusively by the Nazis about their camps during World War II (in which case he may well be correct in stating no records survive), or else films and photos produced from other sources, both during and after the War.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID LASS
Dublin University
Jewish Society

PS: Mr Kuehl was kind enough to send me a copy of his reply prior to its publication, which has provided a satisfactory answer to my queries raised in the above letter.

JERRY KUEHL writes: I did try to choose my words carefully when I wrote about what had not been filmed. A number of documentary films, some of them valuable, have been made about the final solution, but none of them contains film of extermination camps in operation, nor is any such film known to exist. What does exist, is either: still photographs (for instance the series smuggled out of Auschwitz); film made after the event (like the 1946 Polish feature film The Last Station, which was filmed in Auschwitz and in which former inmates appeared); films of other aspects of the extermination programme including records of life in Theresienstadt, the Warsaw Ghetto; a brief but graphic record of Westerbork, a transit camp in Holland; or home movies of Einsatzgruppen at work in Central Europe. This is not, of course, to say that no films of extermination camps were ever made. I think the chances of there ever having been any official filmed record, though, are remote. given the secrecy with which the operations were conducted. I think it unlikely that anyone would now admit to having any informal documents in their possession.

London 25

SIR,-In my interview on my years as programme director of the London Film Festival (SIGHT AND SOUND Autumn 1981), I inadvertently neglected to mention Anna Yates. She was the sole link in the programme department between the first three festivals and the beginning of my years of tenure, and it is safe to say that without her experience, guidance and assistance, I don't think I would ever have been able to get those first few festivals together. Nor, incidentally, would David Robinson have been able to put together the second festival from his hospital bed without the help of Anna Yates.

Yours faithfully, RICHARD ROUD Paris.

Raul Ruiz

SIR,—Where Raul Ruiz is concerned, it is definitely a tricky matter to separate fact from fiction and I'm afraid that Gilbert Adair's assertion that the filmmaker is a former seminarist is definitely not true.

But Adair's fiction accepted as fact is not nearly as strange as reality. There was a time when Ruiz, resplendent in uniform, ran a Salvation Army hostel in a Chilean town called Ancud. His street-corner speeches ('I was a sinner, I was a drunkard') were most impressive; but both his sa regalia and his rejection of a goodly bottle of red wine belong to a now remote past.

Yours faithfully, HANS EHRMANN Santiago, Chile.

GILBERT ADAIR writes: As for Ruiz not having been a seminarist, objection sustained: though a student of theology, he never contemplated entering a religious order. This was my mistake, not the director's. When I apprised him of the more startling claim made by Mr Ehrmann, however, he suggested it might be, on the part of an old acquaintance, what he termed 'a Bavarian joke'.

Anatomy of the Movies

SIR,—The Winter 1981/82 issue of SIGHT AND SOUND carried some very generous comments on the book Anatomy of the Movies, which I edited, and draws particular attention to the exhaustive work we undertook-with the invaluable guidance of the Economist's managing director David Gordon-to adjust for inflation the takings of hundreds of Hollywood movies. In this respect I would like to acknowledge the role played, in what proved to be a very taxing exercise, by Joel Finler. Finler collaborated with me in compiling the Anatomy Lists of All-Time Hits, digging up some amazing statistics and constantly challenging official sources. Neither David Gordon nor myself would wish to see contribution go major unacknowledged.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID PIRIE
London, N.W.5.

Brideshead

SIR,—I was much amused by Nick Roddick's solemn piece on Brideshead Revisited, especially his assertion that it is nothing less than a specimen of high culture.

Come now. From my viewing of the first four episodes, I would say that what we have here is a prime example of something you British do supremely well: a nice, cosy, comforting ramble through a certifiable Great Book, done with a good deal of style and an

alert intelligence granted, but if Mr Roddick considers that the result can be labelled culture, he's kidding himself and your readers. What Granada TV has laboured so earnestly to bring forth is nothing less than a 13-hour orgy of genteel middle-brow slush. But please, don't get me wrong, I'm enjoying every minute of it. There's always a market for high-class kitsch, even amongst those of us who should know clothes are pretty.

Yours faithfully,

PETER CARLSEN New York.

Obituary

SIR,—Though the cinema's necrology for 1981 seems even larger than usual-with the inevitable result that SIGHT AND SOUND'S annual In Memoriam column must have a few omissions-it still seems amazing that the Winter 1981/82 obituary page should leave out Raoul Walsh, who died on 1 January 1981 at the age of 93, especially as his much less well-known brother was (quite rightly) included.

Other omissions one might regret include: Torin Thatcher, that most suavely astringent of British character actors in Hollywood; Glen Anders, the unforgettable Grisby of The Lady From Shanghai; Ross Martin, the asthmatic villain of Blake Edwards' Experiment in Terror (a.k.a. The Grip of Fear); and Dale Hennesy, the art director whose elegant designs so improved Fantastic Voyage, Young Frankenstein and other movies.

Lastly, Hugo Montenegro was

not-of course-the composer of the music for The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, though Montenegro's orchestra made a successful record of the main theme, actually composed by Ennio Morricone. Montenegro's few film scores include The Ambushers and Viva Max!.

Yours faithfully. PIERRE GREENFIELD Bridgend, Mid-Glamorgan.

Thanks to Mr Greenfield for pointing out these and omissions-particularly our entirely unintentional failure to mention Raoul Walsh. EDITOR

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

SEAN FRENCH is doing post-graduate research at Christ Church, Oxford, as well as being theatre critic for Vogue... STEVEN KOVACS is a writer (From Enchantment to Rage, a book about surrealist cinema) and film producer who spent some time working for Roger Corman's New World Pictures . . . LYNDA MYLES, former Edinburgh Film Festival director, has been working as Curator of the Pacific Film Archive . . . MICHAEL PILSWORTH is a senior researcher at London Weekend Television . . . JIM SEALE is a freelance writer in Hollywood who has written for several American magazines . . . WALLACE SHAWN played Diane Keaton's exhusband in Manhattan . . . JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR, art critic of The Times, was their film critic for a number of years ... FRANCIS WYNDHAM is editing a collection of letters by Jean Rhys.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COLUMBIA-EMI-WARNER for Ragtime

20th CENTURY-FOX for Georgia's Friends.

UIP for Reds, Cutter's Way, The Secret of NIMH, posters for Jaws, Jaws II, Piranha, Monster, photograph of James Toback. ARTIFICIAL EYE for Céleste. CINEGATE for My Dinner with André, The Last of the Blue Devils.

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ZOETROPE for One from the Heart, Zoetrope caravan. NEMAI GOSH for Pikoo, Sadgati, photograph of Satyajit Ray.

MUZAFFAR ALI for Umrai Jaan. STEVEN KOVACS for Up from the Depths.

BRITISH AEROSPACE for picture of satellite.

BOB SWAIM for La Nuit de St. Germain des Près. LAURIE LEWIS for picture of

Napoleon screening. DAVID WILSON for photograph of video shop.

NFA STILLS COLLECTION for Fires Were Started, Pimpernel Smith, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, La Ronde, Napoleon poster.

PRINTED BY Brown Knight and Truscott Ltd., London and Tonbridge, England.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES. (4 issues) £5.70 including postage. Back issues £1.45 including postage and packing. U.S.A. \$14.00. Price per copy in United States \$3.50. Back issues \$3.50.

Binders to hold two years' issues £4.50, postage included (\$10.50). SOLE AGENTS FOR U.S.A.: Eastern News Distributors, 111 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011. PUBLICATION DATES: 1st January, April, July, and October.

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• ALLIGATOR

(Alpha) The exploitation field is still generally polluted with sub-standard variations on *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, but this latest offering from writer John Sayles (*Piranha*, *The Howling*) provides some welcome relief. The narrative pulls few surprises: Ramon, an alligator flushed into the sewers as a baby, grows to massive proportions before taking to the city streets with destruction on his mind and, naturally, a lone cop on his scaly tail. Sayles, however, not only gives the material a neat cutting edge (Ramon takes revenge on the dubious research firm whose illicit hormone experiments are responsible for his gargantuanism), but ensures that humour and characterisation take precedence over mechanical slaughter. Director Lewis Teague, previously teamed with Sayles on The Lady in Red, provides solid support, but the script's the thing. (Robert Forster, Robin Riker, Dean Jagger.)

• BLOOD WEDDING

(Artificial Eye) Hardly a box-office cert, Saura's 'document on creation' magically pulls a number of threads together. His camera records a final rehearsal of Antonio Gades' dance version of Lorca's *Bodas de* Sangre in a bare studio. Gades choreography, using popular dance forms like flamenco and pasodoble, manages to connect with Lorca's original inspiration in a way that English translations have never been able to do, on the stage or in subtitles. Saura's camera follows the movements of the dancers with an almost uncanny exactness, reproducing both the figures and the intentions of the choreography. In no sense a dance documentary, Blood Wedding is very much a film in its own right, generating moments of pure excitement and offering, perhaps for the first time to English-speaking audiences, an insight into the intense and often inaccessible world of Lorca's tragedies. It does seem strange though, that with well over half Saura's films still unreleased in Britain, Blood Wedding should be one of the few to be shown here in the last fifteen years. (Antonio Gades, Cristina Hoyos, Juan Antonio, Pilar Cardenas.)

• THE CONTRACT

(Cinegate) Handling a new form, broad but still ironic comedy, with wry accomplishment, Krzysztof Zanussi observes how all Polish society has (or had, the film was made in 1980) slipped into voluntary 'contracts' not so much to get ahead as merely to survive. An uncertain, impecunious couple are jostled into marriage, with

intimations of 'advancement' but without really knowing each other. She flees from the altar but the wedding breakfast at the sumptuous villa of the groom's unruffled father carries on regardless. The guests, too, frolic and lose themselves in their own personal concerns, as if things can be made to come right by the simple expedient of ignoring the shambles of the wedding (read, if you wish, though the film is anything but polemical or weightily symbolic, a wider meaning). A tonic, tragic reminder of the power of comedy in the face of catastrophe. (Maja Mrozowska, Tadeusz Lomnicki, Leslie Caron.)

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

(UIP) What this feature condensation and Chicago transposition of Dennis Potter's unique BBC serial jettisons in terms of 'heaven' (almost all the religious motifs), it partly compensates for in a double-edged emphasis on the 'pennies'. MGM opulence—sound stage production numbers and all—recreates both the Depression era and its daydreams for Potter's frustrated fantasists, as sheet-music salesman Steve Martin and fallen angel Bernadette Peters escape economic and emotional squalor through the music—and the musicals—that sustain. The downbeat sex and murder melodrama is dressed in dark quotes from Edward Hopper and Walker Evans; the silver lining Walker Edwars, the silver lifting plots Hollywood song 'n' dance (and art direction) from Berkeley's Warners to Astaire's RKO. With the Brechtian lip-synch technique intact, Potter and director Herbert Ross have pulled off a fascinating dialectical expansion of the 30s ironies of 'We're in the Money'. (Christopher Walken, Jessica Harper.)

ABSENCE OF MALICE

(Columbia-EMI-Warner)
The other side of the Watergate coin. Investigative reporter Sally Field is duped into running a story about gangster's son Paul Newman and a missing union official. But the toils of the subsequent plot stifle both the issue of journalistic responsibility and the inevitable romantic interest. (Bob Balaban; director, Sydney Pollack.)

THE BORDER

Trouble along the border from illegal Mexican immigrants. Trouble, too, from script and direction which telegraph every nuance as Jack Nicholson, tiring of the US consumer society, finds an angel on the wrong side of the racial tracks. (Harvey Keitel, Warren Oates, Valerie Perrine; director, Tony Richardson.)

BUDDY BUDDY

Again resorting to the stage (from which so much of their recent work has derived), Billy Wilder and I. A. L. Diamond turn out a lame version of the play that has already been filmed by Edouard Molinaro (L'Emmerdeur). Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau are the Odd Couple again; but Panavision and sunny Californian settings don't help to sharpen their comedy. (Klaus Kinski, Paula Prentiss.)

BUTTERFLY

(New Realm) Painfully painstaking version of James M. Cain's novel about incest among the hillbillies. The intended steamy atmosphere is chilled by the single petulant pout sported throughout by the nev sex kitten Pia Zadora. (Stacy Keach, Orson Welles, Stuart Whitman; director, Matt Cimber.)

CHANEL SOLITAIRE

(HandMade)
The life of fashion revolutionary Coco Chanel, pitched somewhere between soap opera and serious biography. Flavourless, overdecorated and—apart from the naming of 'Number Five'— not even bad enough to be funny. (Marie-France Pisier, Timothy Dalton, Brigitte Fossey; director, George Kaczender.)

DRAGONSLAYER

(Disney) Rather slow and muddled Dark Ages adventure tale with intimations of mortality. The dragon is quite impressive, however, and Ralph Richardson potters entertainingly about as a geriatric sorcerer. (Peter MacNicol, Caitlin Clarke; director, Matthew Robbins.)

FIRST MONDAY IN OCTOBER

Undernourished essay in Broadway-Shavian comedy, with Walter Matthau and Jill Clayburgh as Supreme Court justices. Lack of intellectual edge not compensated by sufficient ingenuity in plotting or dialogue. (Director, Ronald Neame.)

GHOST STORY

(UIP)
Pedestrian horror film in which Hollywood veterans (Astaire, Houseman, Fairbanks Jnr, Melvyn Douglas) confront a vengeful female spirit.
Innumerable close-ups of rotting flesh are the only pretence at atmosphere. Director John Irvin provides further evidence that excellent TV work (Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy) doesn't transfer to the big screen. (Craig Wasson.)

HALLOWEEN II (Columbia-EMI-Warner) The elegantly choreographed mayhem continues; though John Carpenter and Debra Hill, who co-wrote and produced, have speeded up the frenzy and unwisely attempted to account for the scarifying silliness. (Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Pleasence; director, Rick Rosenthal.)

ON GOLDEN POND

(UIP) A stage play about growing old filmed with the help of New England scenery and two veteran stars, Henry Fonda (good) and Katharine Hepburn (less so). Moments of truth survive some cloying contrivances and the miscasting of Jane Fonda (a divorced daughter). Mark Rydell directs on bended knees.

POLYESTER

John Waters goes up-market for this clumping parody of middle-class values, presented in the jokey Odorama process (you get a card with ten smells to be released as instructed). Cleaned up and done on a bigger budget, the deliriously outrageous excess

of Pink Flamingos degenerates into facetiousness. (Divine, Tab Hunter.)

THE SECRET POLICEMAN'S OTHER BALL

Unlike its predecessors, this record of the 1981 Amnesty comedy gala was not made specifically for TV: as a result the material, which is fresher than usual, has a sharper, ruder cutting edge. Much to relish. (John Cleese, Alexei Sayle, Billy Connolly; director, Julian Temple.)

SHARKY'S MACHINE

(Columbia-EMI-Warner) Slight but tight urban thriller from the more usually laid-back Burt Reynolds, directing himself as the cop who bounces back from demotion to the vice squad basement to lead an assault on the world of high-rise corruption. The clichés have the dignity of age, and are handled with confident ease. (Vittorio Gassman.)

TAXI ZUM KLO

(The Other Cinema)
Frank Ripploh, a former West
Berlin teacher, offers an obsessive,
honest and fairly good-humoured account of his own (homo)sexual habits and his largely unsuccessful attempts to put his life in order. Self-indulgence runs rampant.

TICKET TO HEAVEN

(Miracle) Not uninteresting attempt to expose the brainwashing techniques used by fringe cults to snare teenage Jesus freaks. Undercut by perfunctory characterisations and some ludicrously sinister overtones borrowed from pulp fiction. (Nick Mancuso; director, Ralph L. Thomas.)

WHOSE LIFE IS IT ANYWAY?

Slick adaptation of Brian Clark's play in which a sculptor paralysed in a car crash demands the right to euthanasia. Camouflaged under a steady stream of wisecracks, and making much specious reference to the Artist and his need to Create, his case rather begs all the questions it asks. (Richard Dreyfuss, John Cassavetes; director, John Badham.)

WINTER OF OUR DREAMS

(Enterprise)
Earnest study of a young prostitute with a computerised array of serious subjects (like nuclear power) thrown in for good measure. A rather determinedly 'award-winning' performance by Judy Davis, but it's all really about Him (Bryan Brown), not Her. The Australian cinema putting all its box-office eggs in one basket and pretty effectively addling them. (Director, John

THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR

(Gala) Another hybrid concoction from Truffaut, which extends the injokiness of The Last Metro and its attempt to yoke Hitchcockian determinism with Renoir-ish generosity. Numerous Truffaut 'touches' and incidental characters merely muddle the intensity of the plot. (Gérard Depardieu, Fanny Ardant.)

There's a lot of promising talent involved with Towers of Babel – quite apart from the brilliant director *Jonathan Lewis – commendations must go to Screenwriter/Producer *Tony Attard and everyone else concerned with this little gem of a movie. F. Maurice Speed, What's On in London. *Graduates of the National Film School like Cameraman, Roger Deakins.

The School has its own facilities at Beaconsfield Film Studios for professional training in: Animation; Camera; Direction; Editing; Production; Sound and Script-writing. Training can also be arranged in art direction and film composition for candidates with suitable preparation.

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It is ten years since the foundation of the National Film School; that lively institution has just announced the appointment of its first *Fellow, the distinguished David Lean, and its first Honorary Graduate, Bill Forsyth, who made *Gregory's Girl*.

The appointment of Mr Forsyth isn't somehow calculated to send off the end of a year of world cinema with fireworks. But let's think again. The emergence of the National Film School as a creative force is anyway noteworthy.

Dilys Powell,
Punch.

*Also announced recently – NFS Fellowship for Cameraman, Ossie Morris.



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